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A PORTRAIT of CHAUCER

From a Painting found in the House in which Oliver Cromwell was born at Huntingdon

L I F E
OF
GEOFFREY CHAUCER,
THE EARLY ENGLISH POET:
INCLUDING
MEMOIRS OF HIS NEAR FRIEND AND KINSMAN,
JOHN OF GAUNT, DUKE OF LANCASTER:
WITH SKETCHES OF THE
MANNERS, OPINIONS, ARTS AND LITERATURE
OF ENGLAND
IN
THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY WILLIAM GODWIN.

Come like shadows; so depart!

SHAKESPEAR.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

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L I F E
OF
C H A U C E R.

CHAPTER I.

CHAUCER IN EXILE.—HIS PECUNIARY EMBARRASSMENTS.—RETURNS TO ENGLAND.—IMPRISONED IN THE TOWER.—USURPATION OF THOMAS OF WOODSTOCK.—CHAUCER IS DEPRIVED OF HIS EMPLOYMENTS.—SELLS HIS PENSIONS.—IMPEACHES HIS FORMER ASSOCIATES.—TESTAMENT OF LOVE.

AFTER the affair of John of Northampton, CHAP. I.
Chaucer spent several years in adversity and 1385.
distress. As his exile was a voluntary pre- Chaucer in
the Ne-
therlands.
caution on his part, it would seem reasonable
to have supposed that it commenced about
the time of the arrest of this popular leader.
This however appears not to have been the
case. In the Clause Rolls of Richard II,
there is a grant to Chaucer, dated in the

CHAP. L. month of November 1384, of leave of absence from the duties of his office for one month, on urgent business relative to his private affairs^a: he was therefore certainly at this time in England. It is difficult to conceive what reason he could have found for flight, above nine months after the arrest of John of Northampton, and three months subsequently to the trial of that ringleader and the sentence pronounced against him.

Assists his
fellows in
exile.

Chaucer is said to have passed first to Hainault, of which his father-in-law was a native^b; and afterward repaired to the province of Zealand, where he seems to have fixed his principal residence on this occasion^c. Here he met with several of the persons who had been involved with him in the late disturbances, and who like him had judged it prudent to seek their safety in flight. What were the fortune and situation in life of these persons

^a Appendix, No.

^b Life of Chaucer, prefixed to Urry's Edition.

^c Testament of Love, Book I, page 488, col. 1, Urry's Edition.

we are not informed : Chaucer however had CHAP. L.
1385.
brought away with him a larger supply of money than they, or was more successful in obtaining remittances from home ; and, with that liberality which we should expect from the gentleness and kindness of his temper, was eager to supply their wants and relieve their distress ^d.

These persons, he tells us, were afterward driven out of Zealand ^e. It is not easy to account for their expulsion on any other supposition, than that they were pursued by the animosity of the English court, and that the government of these provinces, by way of compliment to Richard, refused any longer to shelter them. Chaucer was not driven out : he was therefore regarded with less antipathy by the ministers of Richard. He was not even deprived of his office of comptroller of the customs ; and in the beginning of the

^d Testament of Love, Book I, p. 487, col. 2.

^e Ditto, page 488, col. 1, Urry's Edition.

CHAP. L. year 1385, when it is perhaps reasonable to
 1385. suppose that he was already in exile, a patent was issued in his favour, permitting him to execute its functions by deputy^f. His situation with the government of his country could not have been very desperate, at a moment when they granted him an indulgence which he had never presumed to solicit in the season of his highest favour.

Treachery
 of his
 friends at
 home.

But, notwithstanding the comparative forbearance of the English government, the embarrassments which Chaucer suffered were exceedingly great. The persons to whom he intrusted the management of his affairs in absence, appear to have been some of those who had been involved with him in the affair of Northampton; but, instead of proving faithful to the confidence he reposed in them, they acted with the basest treachery, detained from him his income, and let out his apartments to hire, without accounting to him for

^f Appendix, No.

the rent, with the purpose, as he says, of CHAP. L.
causing him to perish for want of neces- 1385.
saries^g.

From this statement it appears to follow that Chaucer took his wife with him, if she were living when he went into exile. Had she remained at home to superintend his concerns, it is not probable that he could have been exposed to so great misfortunes. Hence we may infer that the attachment, which subsisted so long between them even before marriage, had not subsided. Prudence would have dictated their separation. But Chaucer was too deeply pervaded with the human and domestic affections, to be able to consent to such a measure. He chose rather to expose himself to every distress, and to trust to the proverbially uncertain tenure of friendship in adversity, than to tear himself from his dearest connections^h.

Is accom-
panied by
his wife.

^g Testament of Love, Book I, page 488, col. 1.

^h Rymer has preserved, in his manuscript collection, a receipt, signed by Chaucer, of half a year's pension to himself, and half a year's to Philippa his wife, a copy of which is inserted in the Appendix to this volume. Taking this as

CHAP. L.

1385.
His child.
ren.

The family of Chaucer, so far as their names have come down to us, consisted of two sons: Thomas, afterward speaker of the house of commons; and Lewis, to whom he has addressed his Conclusions of the Astro-labie. The age of Thomas, at the period of his father's exile, was about thirteen; and Lewis was in his fourth year. Whether he

my guide, I entertained a very sanguine hope of obtaining an exact account of the dates of the commencement and close of Chaucer's matrimonial life. Could the series of these receipts be found, these dates might with great probability be inferred from the period at which the receipts given by Chaucer in behalf of his wife began and finished. Her pension was conferred upon her, in consideration of her having been maid of honour to the queen of Edward III. She was therefore probably an unmarried woman at the time it was granted, was in the receipt of it at the period of her marriage, and continued to receive it till her death. It is not unlikely that the whole series of these receipts is still in existence; but I have been unsuccessful in my endeavour to discover where they are deposited. I applied successively to the Exchequer-Office in the Temple, to the Office of the Clerk of the Pells in Westminster-Hall, and to the Record-Office in the Chapter-House of Westminster Abbey. From all the persons to whom I applied I experienced the greatest politeness and attention, but all concurred in the most positive assurances that no such records exist in their offices.

was accompanied by both of them in his flight is uncertain ; it is probable that, if the wife of Chaucer attended him, they also took with them their youngest son. Chaucer, as we have seen, was desirous to effect what is proverbially called the raising a family ; that is, to place his posterity in such a manner with respect to fortune and station, as to produce a sort of probability that their descendants for several generations would rank among the more eminent members of the commonwealth of England. We may therefore believe that one of the anxieties he suffered in his adversity, arose from the miscarriage he seemed destined to suffer in this favourite scheme.

Thomas Chaucer was at this time thirteen years of age. We may draw some conclusion as to his talents and the respectability of his character, from the high station of speaker which he occupied in successive parliaments, from his having married into an eminent and opulent family, and from his leaving a posterity by his only daughter, who had a very near prospect of ascending the throne. He could not have had a character which natur-

CHAP. L.

1385.

CHAP. L. ally led to these honours, without possessing
1385. qualities at the age of thirteen, which, to an eye so practised and discerning as that of the poet, must have led to great expectations and fond visions of what the boy might one day prove. We may believe that he was carefully educated, for we know that his brother was so educated : and perhaps the age at which young Chaucer had now arrived is one of the most interesting periods of human life. It is an epoch when so much of understanding, adventure, imagination, perseverance and integrity may have manifested themselves, as no longer to expose the fond father to an alarm lest all his hopes of his darling child may be mere phantoms of the brain ; at the same time that, the destination of the child being not yet unfolded, the father has room to amuse himself with a thousand varying pictures of greatness, talents and worth, and at the close of his reverie to pronounce with complacency, One of these shall my son assuredly be ! What was the fortune of the younger son of Chaucer, or even whether he ever arrived at manhood, is

unknown: we have only his father's testimony to the ripeness of his intellect, as well as to the ardour of his own paternal affection, in the circumstance of his having addressed a treatise of astronomy to this son at the age of ten years. We may believe then that, when Chaucer viewed the enterprising youth of thirteen, and the helpless child of four, he pronounced to himself, that scarcely any question of party, any course to be steered in the doubtful and uncharted sea of politics, could justify him in having risked the consigning these children to obscurity, and exposing them to all the temptations, contumelies and intellectual famine of a poor estate.

Chaucer's residence in the Netherlands proved to him a continual source of anxiety. His resources failed: his friends not only deserted, but added to that baseness the guilt of robbing, him. By every favourable wind he expected supplies from England; but every wind brought him nothing but disappointment. Perhaps he expected a more kind and hospitable reception from his wife's re-

CHAP. L.
1385.

His embar-
rassments.

CHAP. L. lations than they extended to him. Perhaps
1385. he had that high spirit, which is found extremely congenial to an enlarged mind, that prompted him to refuse obligations. It is very probable that in Hainault he found relations of his wife, who were in a capacity to afford him pecuniary assistance. The reigning sovereign of the country, Albert, duke of Bavaria, and earl of Holland, Hainault and Zealand, was brother of the prince who had married Matilda of Lancaster, sister to Blanche; and it is likely that this sovereign would not have permitted the poet to suffer any extreme distress. But Chaucer, who had for many years lived a life of opulence and filled situations of eminence in his own country, could not perhaps brook the idea of receiving a precarious and eleemosynary subsistence in a foreign land. In fine he resolved, rather than languish in exile and beggary, to return home, and submit his life, if necessary, to the laws and lawyers of his country.

Chaucer had, till now, been a stranger to misfortune. We have seen reason to believe

that he was the son, perhaps the only son, CHAP. L.
of an opulent tradesman. He received a 1385.
distinguished and expensive education; and
tried his fortune in what men have agreed
to call the honourable profession, of the law.
He had scarcely entered this career, when
he was withdrawn from it by the invitation
of Edward III. He was domiciliated under
the wing of the palace; he was employed to
form the mind of a prince possessing a thou-
sand advantages from nature and fortune,
who proved to him a constant friend, and
was perpetually loading him with benefits
and favour. He was essentially the court
poet without the formality of the name; and
if we, at this distance of time, through the
veil of a language to us obsolete and semi-
barbarous, and with poets who have improved
upon the half-assured essays of Chaucer in
the degree that Spenser and Shakespear and
Milton have done, cannot read his compo-
sitions without confessing the great and the
genuine poet, it is easy to imagine what must
have been the idolatry of his contemporaries,
when his works were brought into notice

CHAP. L. by the sunshine of royal favour, when his
 1385. language was perfection and grace, and when, from the rarity of the spectacle, a poet was regarded as more than man, and such productions as those of Chaucer were deemed the perfection, the Hercules' Pillars, of human genius. Encouraged, though not rendered capricious and insolent, by these advantages, Chaucer gave the reins to his inclination, studied no rigid maxims of economy, and indulged with no less freedom and unconstraint the costly pleasures of the table and of an elegant style of life, than the more genuine and simple delights of study, or of a solitary and romantic excursion among woods and hills and streams.

His retired
 and de-
 stitute
 situation.

It must therefore have been a bitter trial that Chaucer sustained in the period of his exile. He was poor; deserted by his old friends, who cruelly took advantage of his absence to oppress and destroy him; with no admirers, no hospitable greeting, perhaps not one sympathising sentiment beyond the bosom of his own family: and this to him, who had been surrounded with flatterers,

whose name the voice of eulogium had dwelt CHAP. L.
 upon till the very echo was tired with repe- 1385.
 titution, whose visits had made a holiday, and
 whose presence had been every where cheered
 with welcome. Chaucer did not, like Milton,
 when he travelled into foreign parts, present
 the inhabitants of the different countries he
 visited with specimens of his genius in the
 language most familiar to those inhabitants.
 In this one respect at least he was prouder
 than his sublime successor. He knew that
 the delicate and discriminating cultivation of
 one language is a task mighty enough for one
 genius. He disdained to prattle in a foreign
 tongue, "of whiche," as he says, "English-
 men have as gode a fantasye, as the Jay whan
 he chatereth Englishe^b;" and he good-hu-
 mouredly laughed at the attempts of his friend
 Gower in this kind. The consequence how-
 ever was, that, when he came into the Ne-
 therlands, he came among a people who had
 no preconceived consciousness of his merit,

^b Testament of Love, Prologue.

CHAP. L. and who, as to the power of relishing what
1385. he had produced, were not less barbarous than
Ovid had found the borderers upon the Eux-
ine sea.

1386.
Returns to
England.

Chaucer returned to England, full of in-
dignation against the persons to whom he had
confided his affairs in his absence. They
were some of those who had been engaged
with him in the affair of John of North-
ampton ; for, when he gives vent to his re-
sentment against them, he at the same time
expresses his sorrow for the part he had
taken in city-politics, from a conviction that,
whatever were the merits of the cause in
which he had been engaged, the persons
with whom he had acted were, many of
them, such as it was no way honourable to
him to have been connected with. He there-
fore came back to his native soil, anxious to
withdraw from the cares and turmoils of
political contention ; and, though willing, as
we may suppose, to make every exertion that
gratitude or friendship could demand for the
service of John of Gaunt, yet resolved not
again to volunteer in the struggles of op-

posing parties, nor hastily to believe, because a cause was good, and the end in view was honourable, that the persons engaged in that cause were public-spirited, and would disinterestedly and honestly cooperate in the measures necessary to secure its success. He therefore hoped, divorced as he was from his former associates by the treachery of their conduct, that he should be suffered to remain obscure and unmolested in the bosom of his country.

CHAP. L.
1386.

In this however he had been too sanguine. What were the motives of the ministers of Richard for taking him into custody is doubtful. According to his own account, they were desirous of extorting from him some confession as to his confederates. Satisfied, as they were, of the innocence and honour of the king of Castille, they perhaps hoped to gather from Chaucer something that might be tortured into an accusation against his patron, and might enable them to revive and eke out their infamous prosecution of this virtuous prince. Chaucer had scarcely arrived in England, before he was arrested by an

Imprisoned
in the
Tower.

CHAP. L. order from the court, and committed prisoner,
 1386. as is supposed, to the Tower.

Examined
 as a wit-
 ness in
 the court-
 military.

The first indication which can be traced of Chaucer being again in England, occurs in the month of October 1386. It was at this period that he gave the testimony to which we have already had occasion to refer, in the remarkable cause of Scroop and Grosvenor, at the church of St. Margaret, Westminsterⁱ. Supposing therefore that he made use of his leave of absence, granted in November 1384, to retire to the continent, his exile continued for nearly two years. If this were not the date of his flight, it must have taken place later, and of course have continued for a shorter period. From these premises it seems to follow that he was brought up from the Tower to give his testimony in this cause, by an order from the court-military, who must be supposed to have been furnished with sufficient powers for that purpose.

ⁱ Vol. I, Appendix, No. 1.

It must also have been during his imprisonment in the Tower, that he was deprived of the two offices, which he had now held for years, and which, as he informs us, he had always executed with the highest honour and the strictest integrity^j, of comptroller of the customs in the port of London, and comptroller of the small customs. In December of this year Adam Yerdeley was appointed to the first of these situations^k, and Henry Gisors to the second^l, in the very terms of the patents by which they had formerly been conferred upon Chaucer.

CHAP. L.

1386.

Is stripped
of his
public
offices.

The date of this dismissal of Chaucer from the places of consideration and profit which he had held for so long a time is entitled to notice. Thomas of Woodstock, making use of the parliament as his instrument, superseded the royal authority in October, and vested the whole functions of the government in the hands of fourteen persons

by Thomas
of Wood-
stock,
duke of
Gloucester.Suspension
of the
royal au-
thority.

^j Testament of Love, Book II, p. 502, col. 1.

^k Dec. 4. Pat. 10 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 9.

^l Dec. 14. Ditto, m. 4.

CHAP L. nominated for that purpose^m. Two months
1386. after this extraordinary stretch of power, Chaucer was reduced to a private station. It was against the administration of the king that he had struggled in 1384; it was by them that he was driven into exile, and that, having chosen to return to his native country, he was committed to the Tower. Yet they treated him with the veneration due to his unrivalled genius, and never proceeded to extremities against him. When he was most exposed to the displeasure of the crown, they had the liberality to grant him permission to execute that office by deputy, which he was no longer able to execute in person. It was reserved for Thomas of Woodstock, the patron of Gower, and who had so lately shown himself the vehement and intemperate partisan of John of Gaunt, but in whom ambition finally swallowed up every other sentiment, while he continued Chaucer's confinement in the Tower, to de-

^m Knighton, ad ann.

prive him of his principal means of com- CHAP. L.
petence and subsistence.

1386.

It is necessary however that we should observe that we have circumstantial evidence alone of Chaucer having been concerned in the proceedings of John of Northampton. I was very desirous of finding the copy of the warrant committing Chaucer to prison; and for that purpose searched the Clause Rolls of the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth years of Richard II, in other words, of the period from the twenty-first of June 1384 to the twenty-first of June 1389, but without success. This warrant, if discovered, would probably have afforded sufficient materials of deciding respecting the cause, as well as the period, of Chaucer's imprisonment.

Chronology
of Chau-
cer's exile
and im-
prison-
ment.

But, without this voucher, the story seems to be attended with sufficient evidence. Chaucer's exile, return, and imprisonment in the Tower, rest upon his own authority, but are unaccompanied with dates. The cause of his misfortunes he thus describes.

CHAP. L. " In my youth I was drawe to be assentaunt
 1386. and in my mightes helping to certaine ⁿ con-
 juracions and other grete matters of rulyng of
 citezins; and ^o thylke thinges ben my drawers
 in and exitours to tho matters, werne so
 painted and coloured, that, at the prime face,
^p me seemed them noble and glorious to al the
 peple. I than, ^a wenyng mykell merite have
 deserved in furthering and maintenaunce of
 tho thinges, ^t besyed and laboured with all
 my diligence, in werking of thilke matters
 to the ende. And trewly, to tell you the
^s sothe, ^t me rought lytell of any hate of the
^v mighty senatours in thilke cité, ne of ^u com-
 munes malice, for two ^w skilles: one was,

ⁿ confederacies.

^o the motives which drew me in and excited me to the
 measures I pursued, were so coloured by the persons whose
 leading I followed.

^p they appeared to me.

^a believing that I should deserve well of the public.

^t busied myself. ^s sooth. ^t I took little account.

^v the magistrates. ^u the common people.

^w reasons, Sax.

I ^x had comforte to ben in soche plite, that CHAP. L.
1386.
both profite were to me and to my frendes ;
another was, ^y for commen profite in comunaltie is not, but pece and tranquillité with just governaunce proceden from thilke profite ; ^z sithen me thought the ^a first painted thinges, malice and evyll meninge, withouten any gode ^b availinge to anye peple, and of tyrannye purposed ^c.”

Chaucer then states the pretences and modes of reasoning brought forward by the party he embraced. “The thinges whiche, quod they, ben for commune avauntage, maye not stand, ^d but we ben executours of

^x saw myself to be in such circumstances, as enabled me to be of service both to myself and my friends.

^y a belief that the social state produces no general advantage, unless it is attended with peace and tranquillity, and a just and impartial government.

^z besides, moreover.

^a the things varnished and glossed over to sight by the royal party, to have been.

^b descending, following.

^c Testament of Love, Book I, p. 485, col. 2.

^d unless.

CHAP. L. tho matters, and auctorité of execucion by
 1386. ^e comen election to us be delyvered ; and that
 muste enter by strength of ^f your main-
 tenaunce ; for, we out of soch degré put,
 oppression of these olde hindrers shal againe
^g surmounten, and putten you in soche sub-
 jection that in endlesse wo ye shul com-
 plaine. The governementes, quod thei, of
 your cité, left in the handes of ^h torcencious
 citezins, shal bring in pestilence and de-
 struccion to you gode menne ; and therfore
 let us have the comune administration to
 abate soche yvelles. There ben citezins many,
 for ⁱ ferde of execucion that shall be done for
 extorcions by hem committed, ben evermore
 ayenst these purposes and al other gode men-
 inges^j.” He adds, “ And so, when it fell that
 fre eleccion by grete clamour of ^k moche
 peple [who], for grete disease of misgovern-

^e common.

^f the citizens’.

^g come up, arise.

^h usurious, using extortion. Speght.

ⁱ fear.

^j p. 486, col. 2.

^k the court party.

aunce, so fervently ^lstoden in ther eleccion CHAP. L.
 that they hem submitted to every ^mmaner 1386.
 face, rather than have suffered the maner and
 the rule of the ⁿhated governours (notwith-
 standyng that in the contrary helden moch
 comune ^omeiny, that have no consideracion
 but onelye to voluntary lustes withouten
 reson), than thilke governour so forsaken,
^pfaininge toforne his undoinge for misrule in
 his time, ^qshope to have letted thilke elec-
 cion, and have made a newe him selfe to
 have bene chosen, and ^runder that mokyl
 fore arered ^s.''

This description coincides in so many
 particulars with Walsingham's account of
 the proceedings of John of Northampton,
 that it is almost impossible to doubt that
 these were the proceedings in which the poet

^l stood, persisted.

^m imaginable disadvantage.

ⁿ the popular party.

^o followers, adherents. FR.

^p conceiving beforehand, anticipating.

^q purposed to have hindered.

^r under that pretence raised a great uproar and commotion.

^s p. 486, col. 2.

CHAP. L. found himself so deeply entangled. If Chau-

13c6.

cer describes the measures adopted by the popular party less favourably than we should expect from a confederate, or than the measures probably deserved, it should be considered that, in the work from which the above extracts are taken, one of his objects is to deliver his recantation, and reconcile himself with the government he had offended. Elsewhere he says of himself in the course of the work, "Thy worldly godes ben 'fulliche dispente, and thou berafte out of dignitie of office'." This proves to a certainty, that the composition was not written till after the close of the year 1386.

Convulsive
state of
England in
the tenth
and ele-
venth
years of
Richard II.

To the period in which, as it appears, Chaucer was committed to the Tower, succeeded a long series of civil broils and contention, during which he probably was almost forgotten by those who had it in their power to restore to him the advantages of liberty.

† fully.

‡ p. 490, col. 2.

The same hand which gave away the em-
 ployments of the poet, had annihilated the
 royal authority, and reduced the king to a
 cipher. Richard did not remain supine under
 the indignities which were heaped upon him.
 Under pretence of escorting his favourite
 Vere, who, it had been agreed upon with
 the usurper, was to be sent into a sort of
 honourable exile in Ireland, he left the me-
 tropolis, and journeyed into Wales^u; but,
 having remained some time there, he turned
 back, and, with Vere, De la Pole, Tresilian
 and others, held a council at Nottingham
 respecting the best means to be employed
 for resuming the royal authority^v. The com-
 missioners who now possessed the govern-
 ment of the realm, were alarmed at the in-
 telligence of what was going forward; and
 with great art and a thousand specious in-
 sinuations, induced Richard to return to the
 metropolis^w. No measure could have been
 more fatal to his interests. From the moment

CHAP. L.

1386.

1387.

August 25.

Novem-
ber 10.^u Walsingham, ad ann.^v Knighton, ad ann.

CHAP. L. in which he acceded to this proposal, he
 1387. became virtually a prisoner. The inexorable
 Woodstock proceeded without mercy to the
 destruction of as many of the advisers and
 creatures of the court, as he could get into
 his power. He called together a parliament;
 1388. and, as the assembly of that sort which
 February. stained the annals of the last reign was sur-
 named the Good Parliament, so this, equally
 a favourite with the blind and undistinguish-
 ing vulgar, gained the appellation of the
 Wonder-working Parliament*. One day,
 they sent sir Robert Tresilian and sir Ni-
 cholas Brembar to the gallows; and another,
 they passed sentence of death upon six of
 the judges†. Previously to this ceremony,
 these magistrates were publicly dragged from
 their seats in Westminster Hall, and com-
 mitted to the Tower†. The pretext of their
 condemnation was the opinion they had sign-
 ed at Nottingham, declaring the commission,
 which had deprived Richard of the govern-

* Stow, ad ann.

† Knighton, ad ann.

ment and vested the royal authority in a council of fourteen persons, to be contrary to the law and constitution of England. Their sentence was afterward commuted into banishment for life. The lawyer who officially drew up the paper which they were arraigned for signing, was also condemned, and executed². Sir Simon Burley and three other persons of great distinction about the court were the next victims; and Woodstock is said to have permitted the queen to remain three hours on her knees before him, intreating in vain for the life of this accomplished courtier³.

During these scenes of tumult and confusion Chaucer remained a prisoner, in the centre of all the violences that were committing, and unable either to act or to escape. It is probable that, in this fierce contention as to who should be master of the kingdom, he was considered as a person of inferior

Situation of
Chaucer
in this
period.

² Parliamentary History of England, ad ann.

³ Hume, ad ann.

CHAP. L. consequence, and obliged to yield his apartments to some statesman of loftier title who was a few days after conducted to the scaffold. He could not feel much at ease in the circumstances in which he was placed; and perhaps scarcely knew whether his personal safety would best be promoted by the continuance of the usurpation, or by the restoration of the royal authority. He had been an officer of the government; he had been favoured and distinguished by Anne of Bohemia; and it might be doubted whether the stern and savage Woodstock, who had already stripped him of his employments, would not find a time to proceed to the last extremities against him. On the other hand, if the king were restored, the prospects of Chaucer would not be much improved. It was the king and his ministers that he had offended; it was the king who had driven him into exile, and who, when he privately returned, consigned him as a state-prisoner to the Tower. He had therefore little to hope, and something to fear, from the revival of the royal authority.

Chaucer has thrown out many allusions to CHAP. L.
the ease and opulence he had formerly en- 1388.
joyed. “ I, that some tyme in delicious
houres was wont to enjoy blisful ^b stoundes,
am now dryve by unhappy ^c hevinesse to
bewaile my sondrie ^d yvels in ^e tene.—Thus,
^f witlesse, thoughtfull, ^g sightlesse lokynge, I
endure my penaunce in this derke prisonne,
^h caitiffned fro frendshippe and acquaintaunce,
and forsaken of al that any worde dare
speke ⁱ.” And again, “ Although I hadde
lyttell, in ^j respecte amonge other grete and
worthy, yet had I a faire ^k parcel, as me
thought for the tyme, in ^l forthering of my
sustenaunce.—I had richesse suffisauntly to
^m weive nede; I had dignité to be revered
in worship. Power me thought that I had to
kepe fro min enemies; and me semed to
shine in glory of renome.—Every of tho
joyes is turned into his contrary: for richesse,

^b seasons. ^c adversity. ^d evils. ^e sorrow.
^f void of foresight. ^g looking at a blank. ^h captived.
ⁱ Testament of Love, Beck I, init. ^j comparison.
^k portion. ^l furthering, procuring. ^m wave, prevent.

CHAP. L. now have I povertie ; for dignitie, now am I
 1388. enprisoned ; in stede of power, wretchednesse
 I suffre ; and, for glory of renome, I am now
 dispised and " fouliche hated °."

Sells his
 pensions.

Nor in these complaints was the poet guilty of any exaggeration. We have seen that, early in his imprisonment, he was stripped, by the prevailing party, of the official appointments which had supplied the principal part of his income. In May 1388, we again find him obtaining a patent ^p, permitting him to resign the two pensions of twenty marks each, which were all that now remained to him of the bounty of the crown, and which were now probably exchanged for the money demanded by the urgent and immediate wants of himself and his family.

1389.
 His employ-
 ments in
 prison.

It is in adversity, more than on any other occasion, that a well-ordered mind reaps to the full the pre-acquired advantages of literature, cultivation and reflection. The muse,

^a foully.

^o Book II, p. 502, col. 1.

^p Appendix, No. XVIII.

—the muse that had won the ear of his CHAP. L.
1389.
former sovereigns, and that had been the primary cause of his fortune during life, as well as of his lasting fame,—accompanied Chaucer to the gloomy and dreary walls in which he was now shut up. Cast down among common men, he yet did not feel like a common man. In this uncertainty, humiliation and solitude, he recollected his former pursuits, the cherished visions of his happier days, and became again an author. It is likely that he was forbidden the visits of his friends ; but by the magic power of fancy he called about him celestial visitants. It is likely that a jailor or a turnkey was planted in his apartment, under pretence of checking unlicensed attempts at correspondence or escape, but in reality serving only to exclude him from one of the best inheritances of man, the power of being alone in the silence of elemental nature and with his own thoughts. Chaucer however, assisted by the workings of his mind, instead of seeing continually the base groom who attended him, saw only the

CHAP. I. Gods who protected and cheered him in
1389. his cell.

Testament
of Love.

Chaucer in his youth had translated Boethius. The best work of Boethius, that which Chaucer had put into English, was composed by the Roman while he was a state-prisoner under the reign of Theodoric king of the Goths. In the prison in which he was immured, Boethius, soon after he had finished the work, was murdered by order of the tyrant. Chaucer, in the gloomy reveries of his fancy, reaped a certain pleasure in imagining a parallel between himself and the virtuous Boethius. Boethius was accused of having been concerned in certain attempts for the liberties of Rome: Chaucer had also offended the dishonest government of England by attempts for the liberties of his native city. Boethius has been applauded by all succeeding times as the last citizen of Rome who was worthy of the name of a Roman: Chaucer also hoped that he should be remembered as the strenuous adversary of that profligate administration of Richard II, who,

by the measures into which they had entered; prepared the tragical catastrophe which overtook their master at the immature age of thirty-two. Boethius united in his own person the characters of the patriot, the poet, and the firm and philosophical mind superior to events: and Chaucer, in the adversity which overclouded him, naturally wished that hereafter in these respects he might be classed with Boethius. Influenced by this wish, he sat down to write an imitation of the admired work of the Roman; and, as Boethius had penned the Consolation of Philosophy, Chaucer wrote, in a style much more mystical and obscure, but suitable to the taste of his age, the Testament of Love.

Chaucer however does not appear altogether to the advantage he desired, in the comparison with Boethius. Not only the Testament of Love is much inferior, as a literary composition, to the Consolation of Philosophy; but the personal character, and moral and sentimental discipline of the mind, of Chaucer are by no means presented in so favourable a light in this composition, as the

Compared
with Bo-
ethius's
Consola-
tion of
Philoso-
phy.

CHAP. L. temper of Boethius is exhibited in the work
1389. of the Roman. The Testament of Love is interesting to a reader of taste, because such an one will be eager to trace the workings of the mind of Chaucer, when deliberating about his fate, and anxious for the unexplored and unknown future ; and because we are always delighted to see a man possessing the vigour and elasticity in the midst of calamity, to employ his talents, and to call up the resources of reason and literature. But the pleasure we experience in the perusal of Boethius goes beyond this. We see him cheerful in defiance of oppression, and exercising a strong and unfettered talent while his tormentors were almost at the door. An unvitiated observer will love even the weaknesses of our nature, and will hate the Stoic of the domestic scene. But the weaknesses which wake in our bosoms the pulse of approbation, are those of sympathy, anxiety for the fate of others, and an entire and full participation in their feelings. We love the man who is inconsolable for the danger of his friend, and inconsolable for his loss. But,

in the midst of disasters which personally affect himself, it is glorious, or, which is better, it is honourable, for him to be serene.

CHAP. L.

1389.

Boethius, though a Christian, had been bred in the school of Pagan philosophy. Chaucer was a Christian of that school which was formed by monks, and consummated by friars. It was scarcely possible for a man thus educated, to look death in the face, on the bed of sickness, or in the solitude of the closet, with serenity. The death-bed of those ages was studiously set round by the clergy with penitences, and accompanied by an army of terrors. Its great lesson was pusillanimity. In the series of successive centuries, we shall scarcely find a single example in the middle ages of a man led to the place of execution, except for the cause of religion, who met death with firmness. The heroes and patriots of this period were of a different stamp from those of earlier or later times; and, though highly entitled to our commendation, they want a certain finish particularly calculated to render the recollection of them

CHAP. L. interesting to us ¹. Chaucer's production,
1389. written from his prison in the Tower, is in-

¹ One solitary instance of exception offers itself at this period in the history of France, so beautiful and interesting, that it would be almost treason against the character of the human species as it existed in the fourteenth century, to omit it. Jean Desmarets, advocate general to Charles VI, had offended the duke of Burgundy, the king's uncle, by resisting some of his prodigal measures. The duke, who was of a most vindictive temper, seized the occasion of the insurrection in 1382, and contrived to have the name of this innocent and virtuous magistrate included in the list of those who were destined to atone with their lives the guilt of the rebellion. Desmarets, who was above seventy years of age, was dragged to the place of execution amidst the sympathies and astonishment of innumerable spectators. Arrived there, he was exhorted to cry out for pardon from the king; and it was intimated to him that by that submission he might save his life. "I have rendered," answered the grey-haired magistrate, "a true and loyal service to king Philip his great-grandsire, to king John his grandfather, and to king Charles who begot him; none of these princes ever charged me with disloyalty or neglect, nor would the king that now is, if he had attained the age and discernment of a man: I will cry out for mercy to God alone." Saying this, he came forward with a look of serenity and fortitude, and submitted his neck to the stroke of the executioner.

Villaret, *Histoire de France*, ad ann.

fectured with all these faults : he complains too much and too grievously, to possess the proper advantage for exciting our commiseration. It is not to be expressed how much these habits of mind tended to place the virtues and the honour of the oppressed at the mercy of the oppressor, and to inspire the prosperous man with hard and ungenerous dispositions toward his victim.

CHAP. L.
1389.

The Testament of Love is to a considerable degree an allegorical composition. Chaucer says, " In this boke be many privie thinges ^r wimplid and fold, ^s unneth shull ^t leude men the ^v plites unwinde." How much of it was understood by his contemporaries it is not easy for us to decide ; they had the advantage of being bred in the school of allegory, and were accustomed to guess its riddles. In every substitution of one name or one thing for another, however arbitrary it may be in

Its allego-
rical style.

^r muffled, wrapped.

^s not easily, scarcely.

^t ignorant.

^v plaits, intricacies.

^u Book III, p. 519, col. 2.

CHAP. L. appearance, writers of the same period, modified by the same opinions and manners, and reading each other's productions, will inevitably fall into a similar method; so that a familiar acquaintance with a series of compositions of this sort must afford great advantage for the explanation of any one of them. That advantage is now scarcely to be procured; and therefore to readers of the present day the "many privie thinges" folded up by Chaucer in his work will not without great difficulty be penetrated.

Marguerite The most remarkable circumstance in the allegory of this performance is the use made of the term Marguerite. The author, toward the conclusion, shows himself willing to afford his reader every assistance which he deemed necessary or convenient to prevent the misinterpretation of his work. With this view he thus expresses himself. "Also I praie that every man parfitelie ^x mowe knowe, through what intencion of ^y hert this tretise have I

^x may.

^y heart.

drawe. How was it the ^z sightfull manna in desert to children of Israel was spirituall mete? Bodily also it was; for mennes bodies it nourisheth. And yet ^a never the later, Christe it signified. Right so a jewell ^b betokeneth a gemme, and that is a stone vertuous, or els a perle. Margarite, a woman, ^b betokeneth grace, lernyng or wisdom of God, or els holie church. If ^c bred through vertue is made holie fleshe, what is it that our God saith? It is the spirit that yeveth life, the fleshe of nothyng it profiteth ^d."

Marguerite therefore in the Testament of Love, it seems, represents spiritual consolation. This however does not prevent Chaucer through his whole performance from considering it as the name of a woman. He praises her peerless beauty, and laments his unworthiness to obtain her favour; he addresses her in the language of courtship, and intreats that she will not always show herself

^z visible.^a nevertheless.^b signifies.^c bread through divine interposition.^d Book III; ubi supra.

CHAP. L. obdurate to his addresses. In one passage of
 1389. his work, he completely forgets the allegorical sense in which he wishes to be understood, and has the literal woman so clearly before his fancy, that he exclaims, "Alas, that ever ^ekind made her ^fdedlie^s!"—a topic of regret which can scarcely be thought applicable to that intellectual treasure which he professes to have shadowed in his Marguerite.

Testament
 of Love
 compared
 with the
 Complaint
 of the
 Black
 Knight.

It may be here observed, that the plan upon which the Testament of Love is constructed, has a considerable tendency to confirm the interpretation which has been given above of the Complaint of the Black Knight. The same turn of mind which dictated the allegory in the one case, would have led to the writing in an allegorical sense in the other: nor is there any thing more harsh and strained in representing loyalty under the image of love, than in describing spiritual consolation under the figure of a beautiful woman, and typifying the attainment of

^e nature.

^f mortal.

^s Book II, p. 505. col. 1.

God's grace by the humble pursuit of this lady's favour.—It is sufficiently singular that, so late as the end of the sixteenth century, Shakespear composed more than one hundred and fifty sonnets, which, in their literal sense, are addressed to a man, with all the forms and expressions of the passion of love; but which probably cover some secret meaning that no critic has hitherto been so fortunate as to penetrate.

CHAP. L.

1389.

Shake-
spear's
Sonnets.

One passage in the Testament of Love deserves to be quoted, as expressing Chaucer's opinion of his writings, formed when he had already arrived at a very ripe age, and was now placed under a cloud of peril and adversity, of which it was not easy for him to discern the issue. The sense he expresses of his own merits is not conveyed in terms altogether so elevated as those employed by Horace^h and Ovidⁱ, but which perhaps for that very reason convey the idea of a more

Chaucer's
character
of him-
self.

^h Carmina, Lib. III, Carmen xxx.

ⁱ Metamorphoses, Lib. XV, ver. 871.

CHAP. L sober and full persuasion of the claims he
 1389. possessed to the commendation of mankind.

The work principally consists of a dialogue between the prisoner and Love, who visits him in his cell, as Philosophy visited the prison of Boethius. Toward the close of their conversations, a question arises respecting predestination, a favourite topic among literary men, in the times of Chaucer. For the purpose of introducing his own eulogium, the author chooses to forget the identity between himself and the writer of those performances which had so greatly illustrated the literature of England, and makes Love answer thus to the difficulties propounded by her pupil. "I shall tell the, this lesson to lerne,—Myne owne true servaunte, the noble philosophicall poete in Englishe (whiche evermore hym busieth and travaileth right sore my name to increse; wherfore all that willen me gode, owe to doe him worship and reverence both; truly his better ne his ^k pere in schole of my

^k peer.

rules coud I never finde)—He, quod she, in CHAP. L.
1389.
 a tretise that he made of my servaunt Troilus,
 hath this matter touched, and at the full this
 question ¹assoiled. Certainly his noble sayngs
 can I not amend: in godenes of gentil ^mman-
 lich spech without any maner of nicitie of
ⁿstarieres imaginacion, in wit, and in gode
 reson of ^osentence, he passeth al other
^pmakers ^q.

It is remarkable that in this passage Chau-
 cer commends himself in unqualified terms
 as the true servant of Love, and his poem
 of Troilus and Creseide as an honourable
 example of that service; in both these points
 contradicting the admissions of an opposite
 sort, and the apology, contained in the Pro-
 logue to the Legende of Gode Women.
 Hence it may perhaps be inferred, first, that
 the Legende was not written till after the
 period of Chaucer's disgrace, and was a sort

Testament
 of Love
 written
 previous-
 ly to the
 Legende
 of Gode
 Women.

Anne of
 Bohemia
 obtains
 Chaucer
 his par-
 don.

¹ absolved, solved.

^m manly.

ⁿ This word is explained by none of the glossarists.

^o judgment, *sententia*.

^p poets.

^q Book III, p. 518, col. 2.

CHAP. L. of courtly compliment offered to the queen
 1389. on his restoration to favour; secondly, that
 Chaucer now first adopts the mystical worship of the Mar-
 guerite, or daisy. the Good Queen Anne had some share at
 least in obtaining his pardon; and thirdly,
 that it was in the Testament of Love, when
 he laboured under calamity and depression,
 that Chaucer first adopted the mystical sy-
 stem of notions intended to be signified under
 the worship of the daisy.

Restoration
 of Richard
 II.

Richard II. had now been for about two
 years and a half stripped of the prerogatives
 of royalty, and boiled with sentiments of im-
 patience at the thought of his degraded situ-
 ation. He did not fail to comment upon the
 violence and intemperance of Woodstock's
 proceedings; he was persuaded that, how-
 ever the bloody executions of the Wonder-
 working Parliament and the inexorable temper
 betrayed by his uncle on that occasion might
 obtain the applause of the moment, they
 would not prove the basis of a lasting popu-
 larity. Men have a natural bias in favour of
 regular proceedings and old institutions; and
 there was no reason to doubt that, if Richard
 skilfully watched his opportunity, he might

easily regain all he had lost. The present was a violent state of things, and was ill calculated to last. Richard was young ; he had done little of a positive nature to forfeit the affections of his subjects ; he had been saved from perpetrating the worst crimes he meditated, by the auspicious interference of his mother or his consort. He was now twenty-two years of age, a period of life at which a man seems entitled to trial, and which is favourable to a certain degree of discretion. It was obvious that every thing was tending to the restoration of royal authority ; and little was required of the king, more than to claim in a manly and spirited tone the place to which he was born.

Richard II. seems at this time to have had able advisers. He came forward in the council-chamber, and asked what was the age to which he had attained ? He was answered by some who were secretly prepared for the scene. Am I not of an age then, rejoined he, to take the reins of government into my own hands ; and to be no longer under the

CHAP. L.

1389.

CHAP. L. management of tutors ' by this language
1389. avoiding to throw impeachment upon the
conduct of the usurpers, and merely signify-
ing to them that their authority was at an end.
He then proceeded to take the great seal from
the present chancellor^s, and to dismiss Wood-
stock and his associates from their employ-
ments. He took no vengeance upon his ad-
versaries ; he recalled none of his obnoxious
ministers ; he published a general pardon ;
and he remitted to his subjects a half-tenth
and half-fifteenth which had been granted him
by parliament. This revolution was effected
without resistance ; and the imprudences and
excesses of both parties seemed mutually con-
signed to oblivion.

It was on the third of May that Richard II.
defeated the party of his uncle, Thomas of
Woodstock ; and on the twelfth of July fol-
lowing, Chaucer was appointed to the ho-
nourable and lucrative office of clerk of the

^s Walsingham, ad ann.

^s Rymer, 12 R. 2, Mai. 3.

works. The nearness of these dates naturally CHAP. L.
 leads to the inference that there was some 1389.
 connection between the events, and tends to
 confirm the conjecture already delivered that
 Chaucer owed his liberation to the inter-
 position of the queen. Unhappily, however,
 he did not obtain his enlargement uncon-
 ditionally ; and the terms upon which it was
 yielded form the principal blemish in the life
 of the poet.

Chaucer set
at liberty.

The advisers of Richard II. insisted that
 Chaucer should not be set at liberty, till he
 had made an ample confession of what they
 called his misdemeanours, and had impeached
 his former associates. To this proposal he
 ultimately yielded : and, as he tells us in the
 performance we have been considering, of-
 fered to prove the truth of his information,
 by entering, according to the modes of the
 times, the lists of combat with the parties
 accused ; which they, as he adds, knowing
 the veracity of his allegations, declined [†].

Impeaches
his former
associates.

[†] Book I, p. 487, col. 1.

CHAP. L.

1389.
Date of the
Testament
of Love.

The Testament of Love, as appears from various allusions to the situation of the author in the course of the production, was written after Chaucer had given in his confession, and before he was liberated from confinement. It may therefore be referred to the month of June of the present year. His confession, which was made to the king, could not have been delivered earlier than May. From October 1386 to May 1389 Richard was totally stripped of authority; and Chaucer could have had no motive to degrade himself by such a confession, and such an impeachment of the partisans with whom he had been engaged, as he appears to have yielded to. On the other hand, it may well be believed that, when he was appointed in July clerk of the works, he was no longer under confinement in the Tower. The work however, as will shortly be seen, was not published sooner than the year 1393.

Nature of
Chaucer's
inform-
ation.

In the imperfect knowledge we possess respecting the transactions of this period, we are somewhat at a loss to conjecture what could be the motives of the ministers of

Richard II. for extorting from Chaucer the CHAP. L.
1389. concession of which we are speaking. It is scarcely to be imagined that they did it for the sole purpose of degrading his character: at the same time that John of Northampton and his confederates would hardly appear of importance enough to be made objects of prosecution after so long an interval. In fact, Northampton obtained his pardon from the crown in the following year^u. Chaucer himself seems to refer to persons of a higher rank than that of magistrates of the city of London, when he says, "Of tho confederacies maked by my souverains, I ^x nas but a ser-vaunt^y." The memoirs and documents of the times, however, lend us no assistance in discovering the individuals. It could not be Woodstock and the heads of the usurpation; for Richard conducted himself toward them on this occasion with the greatest forbearance and clemency. Least of all, could it be John

^u Pat. 14 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 4.

^x ne was, was not.

^y Book II, p. 502, col. 1.

CHAP. L. of Gaunt ; for from this time forward, though
1389. the dissimilitude of character between him
 and the king always kept them at a distance
 from each other, yet Richard felt convinced
 of the fidelity and loyalty of his uncle, and
 under all trying circumstances resorted to him
 as his most assured and powerful supporter.

His conduct
 censured.

This undoubtedly is the circumstance in
 the life of Chaucer, which conveys the most
 unfavourable impression of him to modern
 times. He stands here in the light of a per-
 son, who accepted the confidence of a certain
 party ; who, from the persuasion that they
 might safely trust him, was admitted into
 their secrets ; who partook of their counsels,
 and shared their attempts ; and who afterward
 purchased his safety by betraying his as-
 sociates. Nothing can justify such a conduct,
 but the supposition that the individual by
 whom it is adopted has been deluded into
 some project of an exceedingly criminal na-
 ture, that he is afterward led by his reflections
 to see it in its true enormity, and that no way
 remains to prevent the perpetration but by a
 judicial impeachment : such a situation is de-

scribed in the person of Jaffier in abbé St. CHAP. L.
 Réal's narrative of the Conspiracy of Venice. 1389.

In that case the treachery employed may be admitted to be commendable, and in some degree to atone for the weakness and guilt incurred by the accuser in the beginning of the transaction.

But the situation of Chaucer was by no means of this sort. The confederacy into which he had entered was probably a commendable one ; and the end for which it had been formed had passed by, and the confederacy been dissolved, before Chaucer gave information respecting his associates.

What then were the motives of his conduct ? He has himself assigned one, in the indignation which he had conceived against them. They had plotted to starve him, had cut off his supplies, and embezzled his income. Its motives. Resentment. He probably thought that no measures were to be kept with persons who had conducted themselves toward him so basely. He was impatient of being any longer accounted their ally. All that was resentful in his nature was stirred up at the thought of the treatment he

CHAP. L. had endured ; and he felt as if it would be an
 1389. offence against morality and human nature to suffer such villainy to go unpunished. These sentiments are undoubtedly congenial to the mind of a man deeply injured ; and especially when the injury proceeds from those for whom he has sacrificed much, whom he has liberally assisted in their difficulties, and for his connection with whom he is even still suffering calamity and distress. Such sentiments may extenuate what is offensive in the conduct of Chaucer in this instance, but cannot justify it. He who pursues retribution for the offences of others, should firmly refuse to obtain it by any sacrifice of the dignity and rectitude of his own character.

Timidity. Perhaps however Chaucer was influenced in his compliance with the importunities and threats of the administration, by a certain degree of timidity and irresolution. This is a very common feature of human character ; and, though it must be confessed to be a blemish, is not destructive of the fundamental principles of a virtuous temper. Chaucer, it may be, was inaccessible to the attacks of

Degree of
 censure
 due to
 this de-
 fect.

corruption ; he boasts very loudly, in the performance we are considering, of his unimpeachable integrity in the execution of his functions as a servant of the crown^z. He was not easily intimidated ; or induced, by calamity or fear, to turn aside from his course : he was for a considerable period faithful to his engagements with his associates, and, as he tells us, “ conceled ther privitie lenger then he should^a.” Such a man might be an excellent member of private and domestic society, a true patriot, and a genuine lover of mankind ; he might be a stranger to the selfish passions, and to that mutability which is so pernicious to the best purposes of life ; generous, tender, affectionate, warm-hearted and charitable. With such endowments, a man might have passed through life in twenty different stations, and not a speck of soil have fastened upon the whiteness of his actions ; had not that single temptation occurred against which alone he was not proof, had

CHAP. L.

1389.

^z Book II, p. 502, col. 1.

^a Book I, p. 488, col. 1.

CHAP. L. not misfortune maliciously conspired to direct
 1389. her attacks against the only imperfect and
 vulnerable point of his nature.

Duration of
 Chaucer's
 adversity.

In estimating the morality of Chaucer's conduct on this occasion, it is also incumbent upon us to take into the account the length of his misfortunes and his imprisonment. From the documents and the reasonings we have produced it seems clearly to follow, that his confinement in the Tower endured for no less a period than three years. He had perhaps been an exile for two years previously to his imprisonment. He had passed through an accumulation of evils; starved for want of remittances abroad, and reduced to sell the slender pittance which remained to him in the form of a pension, for subsistence. He whose resolution holds out during five years of calamity and distress, is no fickle and effeminate character. If Chaucer, who had witnessed the anarchy of his country, and the tragical scenes which were transacted almost in his presence, who had been reduced to barter his last resources for bread, and who saw an affectionate wife and a che-

rished offspring in danger to perish for want, CHAP. L.
 felt at length subdued and willing to give up 1389.
 somewhat of the sternness of his virtue, we
 may condemn him as moralists, but we cannot
 fail in some degree to sympathise with feelings
 which make an essential part of our nature.

One idea arises in this place, which cannot
 fail to strike us as interesting and instructive.
 Chaucer tells us, that his conduct in this in-
 stance involved him in a torrent of ill will,
 and brought upon him the charge of being
 false, lying, base and ungrateful. It was prin-
 cipally to defend himself against these charges,
 that he composed his elaborate performance
 of the Testament of Love.

Chaucer
 the sole
 historian
 of his
 own
 weak-
 ness.

It is probable that the lapse of a single ge-
 neration would have blotted out from the
 memory of his countrymen these censures
 upon the father of English poetry. Who
 now appears as his accuser? Chaucer: Chau-
 cer only. We have no evidence but what we
 draw from this production, that he was ever
 concerned in the turmoils of the city, that he
 was an exile, a prisoner in the Tower, and
 that he was finally led by resentment or by

CHAP. L. terror to the dishonourable act of impeaching
1389. his confederates. Little did the poet think, when he sat down to write this laborious apology for his conduct, that he was hereby perpetuating an imputation, which without his interference Time was preparing to blot out for ever from the records of memory, while his poetical compositions were destined to render him dear to the lovers of the muse as long as the English language shall endure. How feeble and erroneous are the calculations of the wisest of mankind !

But what is most extraordinary is, that the Testament of Love was not published under the immediate uneasiness and impatience of the moment, and did not receive the last hand of the author till several years after. This is evident from Gower speaking of it as an unfinished work in the sixteenth year of Richard II, in some lines which we shall presently have occasion to quote. Chaucer therefore did not enter the field against his censurers while the accusations to which he was exposed were yet in their vigour ; but brought forward his defence at a time

when, as we may reasonably suppose, the CHAP. L.
malignity of which he complained had lost 1389.
its venom, and he had been fully restored to
his place in the community.

CHAP. LI.

CHAUCER APPOINTED CLERK OF THE WORKS.—
 JOHN OF GAUNT RETURNS TO ENGLAND AFTER
 AN ABSENCE OF THREE YEARS.—CREATED DUKE
 OF AQUITAINE.—CHAUCER RESIGNS HIS OFFICE,
 AND RETIRES TO WOODSTOCK.—CONCLUSIONS
 OF THE ASTROLABIE.—BREACH BETWEEN CHAU-
 CER AND GOWER.—CANTERBURY TALES.—PEN-
 SION OF TWENTY POUNDS *PER ANNUM*.

CHAP. LI. **J**OHⁿ of Gaunt, as we have seen, sailed
 1386. for Spain in the month of May 1386. He
 Spanish ex- took with him an army of twenty thousand
 pedition of men ; with sir Thomas Percy, afterward earl
 John of of Worcester, as admiral of his fleet, and sir
 Gaunt. John Holland as constable, of his forces ^a.

^a Froissart, Vel. III, Chap. xxix. Knighton, ad ann. The number (20,000) is taken from Knighton ; who however, stating the army a few lines further in a different way, makes it to have consisted of 2,000 men at arms and 8,000 archers ; a more probable computation.

The king presented him, in a solemn audience CHAP. LI.
of leave, with a crown of gold, and the queen 1386.
made a similar present to his consort ; and a
proclamation was issued that every one should
acknowledge them for king and queen of
Spain. A considerable portion of the Castil-
lians regarded the title of his consort, the
legitimate heir to the throne of that kingdom,
as sacred ; and he had been invited to the
enterprise by John king of Portugal, whose
dominions were laid claim to, and his capital
besieged, by the reigning king of Castille, son
to Henry of Transtamare.

The military success of this enterprise was
such as it was not difficult to have foreseen.
John of Gaunt, having landed at Corunna in
the month of August, gained some advantages,
and took several towns. He married his eldest
daughter by the princess Blanche to his royal
ally^b. But the progress he made was by no
means decisive ; and he lost more by the un-
happy effects of the climate, than he had

1387.
Philipa of
Lancaster
married to
the king of
Portugal.

^b Froissart, Chap. xxxvii, xxxviii, xxxix. Knighton, ad ann.

CHAP. LI. gained by the military prowess of himself

1387. and his followers. He therefore found it necessary, in the autumn of the following year, to retire with his forces into that part of the duchy of Aquitaine which was still possessed by the English^c.

John of
Gaunt re-
tires into
Aquitaine.

1388.

Treaty of
peace be-
tween him
and the
reigning
king of
Castille.

Here a circumstance of good fortune attended him, which served in some measure to balance the miscarriage of his expedition. A negotiation was opened for the marriage of his only daughter by his Spanish consort, with the duke of Berri one of the uncles of the king of France; and John, the reigning monarch of Castille, hearing of the proposal, and being alarmed for the consequences which might arise from placing the claim to his crown in such hands, immediately resolved, by the most alluring overtures on his part, to defeat the project^d. In conclusion, the princess was married to Henry prince of Asturias, eldest son to the king in possession; two hundred

Catherine
of Lancas-
ter mar-
ried to the
prince of
Asturias.

^c Froissart, Chap. lxxxvii, &c.

^d Froissart, Chap. cxlii, cxxliii.

thousand nobles were given to John of Gaunt CHAP. LI.
 to indemnify him for the expences of his ex- 1388.
 pedition^e; and a pension of ten thousand
 pounds *per annum* was settled out of the reve-
 nues of Castille upon himself and his consort
 respectively^f. He returned to London in
 November 1389, bringing with him, accord-
 ing to Knighton, forty-seven mules loaded
 with chests of gold^g; and it has been noticed
 among the effects of his enterprise, that he
 succeeded on this occasion in entailing the
 crowns both of Portugal and Castille upon

1389.
 John of
 Gaunt
 returns to
 London.

^e Froissart, Chap. cxxxviii.

^f Walsingham, A. D. 1389. Sixteen thousand marks upon John of Gaunt and twelve thousand upon his consort: Knighton, *ad ann.* It is difficult to compute the value of John of Gaunt's acquisitions on this occasion. They are variously stated in the contemporary authors; and the writ in Rymer (Vol. VII, 12 Ric. 2, Aug. 26) by which the treaty is confirmed, does not enter upon these particulars. The sums in the text would amount to a prompt payment of £. 1,200,000 in modern money, and a pension of £. 360,000 *per annum*. But this seems to exceed belief. Knighton however says that John of Gaunt brought away with him only half the indemnification; and the pensions were perhaps never paid.

^g Knighton, *ad ann.*

CHAP. LI the heads of his descendants. He of course
 1389. surrendered at this time his personal claims
 to the Spanish sovereignty.

The return of John of Gaunt to his native country, after an absence of more than three years, was hailed with the warmest congratulations. The king had already succeeded in putting an end to the usurpation of Thomas of Woodstock; he was inclined to conduct himself with forbearance and moderation toward those who had so deeply offended him; and the task was congenial to the dispositions of John of Gaunt, to reconcile the differences, and restore good understanding and kindness, between persons whose true interests were the same. The result of his return to his native country displayed itself in general harmony; and he was rewarded by Richard with a grant of the fief of the duchy of Aquitaine in the same manner in which it had been enjoyed by his elder brother the Black Prince ^h.

Created
 duke of
 Aquitaine.

^h Rymer, 13 Ric. 2, Mar. 2. It has been stated on the authority of Froissart (Vol. IV, Chap. lxiv), that John of

An absurd story has been introduced in CHAP. LI.
 this place, of John of Gaunt advancing a 1389.
 demand in full parliament, that his eldest Calumny of
 son, afterward Henry IV, should be recog- Leland
 nised as presumptive heir to the crownⁱ. The refuted.
 true heir, in case of Richard dying without
 issue, was Roger Mortimer earl of March,
 eldest son of Philippa, the only daughter of
 Lionel duke of Clarence; and he had accord-
 ingly been recognised in that character in the
 year 1387^k. John of Gaunt's proposal is
 referred to the year 1396ⁱ. It is extraor-
 dinary that such a tale should have been so
 often repeatedⁱ, and never have been refuted.

Gaunt, a few years after, again resigned the duchy of Aquitaine into the hands of the king. (Collins, Life of John of Gaunt; 19 Ric. 2.) Walsingham asserts the same thing. This however is not true. He is described by the titles of the late duke of Aquitaine and Lancaster, in a patent of Richard II, dated a few weeks after his death. (The patent is recited in the Rolls, 1 Hen. 4, p. 1, m. 10.)

ⁱ Leland, Collectanea, Tom. I, p. 383.

^k Sandford, Book III, Chap. xiv.

ⁱ See Sandford, Book IV, Chap. i, and Collins, Life of Gaunt, ad ann.

CHAP. LI. An argument is by the historians put into the
1389. mouth of John of Gaunt, founded upon the ambiguity of the surname of Crouchback, which had been given to Edmund earl of Lancaster, brother to Edward I. The true meaning of this name refers to the cross worn on the backs of those who had taken the vow of pilgrimage or crusade to the Holy Land ; in the same manner as the inhabitants of a certain monastery were called the Crutched, or Crossed, Friars ^m. The tale however represents John of Gaunt as stating Edmund to be twin to his brother the king (though he was in reality nearly six years younger ⁿ), and adding that, his back having been broken in his infancy, he was set aside from the succession, though the first born, and Edward I. preferred before him. The story proceeds to say, that the earl of March replied to John of Gaunt, affirming that Edmund Crouchback was a most elegant figure, and a very valiant

^m Stow, Survey of London : Aldgate Ward.

ⁿ Matt. Paris, A. D. 1239, 1245.

soldier, as might be seen in the chronicles.—CHAP. LI.

The earl of March was at this time lieutenant 1389.

of Ireland, and appears not to have visited England for several years °. No pretence could be more disgraceful from the lips of John of Gaunt, than one which thus represented his ancestors for several generations as usurpers.

If he had been a man of unlicensed ambition, this could never have led him to contemplate with desire the idea of living a subject under the reign of his son : he was at this time only fifty-six years of age, and of a most robust constitution. But he had in reality devoted his life to loyalty and his country. His son

1390.

had engaged, during the father's absence in Spain, in the cabals of Thomas of Woodstock; but John of Gaunt had been at all times the firmest supporter of the throne. In fact, the crafty and cold-hearted Henry IV. was assiduous in propagating this fable in the sequel ^p; and was no doubt willing that it

° Sandford, Book III, Chap. xiv.

^p Cotton, 1 Hen. 4.

CHAP. II. should be supposed to have the authority of
 1390. his generous and noble-minded father.

Chaucer ap-
 pointed
 clerk of the
 works.

Chaucer, as we have seen, was in the summer of 1339 appointed to the office of clerk of the works^q. This was a situation which may be supposed to have been in many respects more congenial to his temper, than his former employment of comptroller of the customs. Its duties related to the erection, repair and embellishment of the king's mansions, parks and domains; and, among the documents to be found in our records, illustrating the life of Chaucer, one is a commission addressed to him of the date of twelfth of July 1390, for work to be done to St. George's chapel in the castle of Windsor^r. He had the further advantage in this new appointment, of being entitled by precedent and patent to the assistance of a deputy, for whom a salary was provided by the crown; whereas, in his former office of comptroller of the customs, it had been usual,

Employed
 in repair-
 ing St.
 George's
 chapel at
 Windsor.

^q Appendix, No. XXI.

^r Appendix, No. XXII.

as has appeared, to require the principal to CHAP. LI.
 discharge his functions in person, and to keep 1390.
 the accounts of his place with his own hand.
 The salary of his present employment, as has
 been already mentioned^s, was two shillings
per diem ; making an annual income of thirty-
 six pounds ten shillings, and equivalent, in
 denominations of modern money, to an in-
 come of six hundred and fifty-seven pounds.

Chaucer does not appear to have possessed
 the appointment of clerk of the works longer
 than about twenty months. My researches
 have not enabled me to find the patent con-
 ferring the office upon his successor ; but,
 without this direct evidence, I have disco-
 vered documents sufficient very nearly to fix
 the length of time for which he occupied this
 situation. The name of the person who was
 clerk of the works in the fifteenth and six-
 teenth years of Richard II. is John Gedney ;
 and I find a record of this person appointing
 a deputy, of the date of 16 September 1391^t.

1391.
 Resigns.

^s Chap. XXXVI, p. 505. ^t Pat. 15 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 24.

CHAP. LI. In the rolls of the preceding year of Richard II, there is an instrument to the same purpose, by which Chaucer appoints a deputy, dated 22 January 1391^v. It was therefore at some period in the interval between these dates that Chaucer retired to a private station.

1391.

We have no information to guide us as to the cause of his retirement : and are therefore at liberty to conjecture, either that the office was taken from him that it might be given to some more useful and consummate courtier ; or that, satiated with the hurry and turmoils of public life, he voluntarily determined, being now sixty-three years age, to spend the short remainder of his life in the midst of that simplicity and solitude which he so ardently loved.

Retires to
Wood-
stock.

There is a tradition which represents him as passing some of his last years at his house at Woodstock^u, which had been the favourite haunt of the most peaceful and prosperous

^v Pat. 14 Ric. 2, p. 2, m. 34.

^u Life, prefixed to Urry's Edition.

period of his earlier existence ; and this sup- CHAP. LI.
1391.
position seems on the whole to be the most probable. His Conclusions of the Astrolabie, which carries in the body of the work the date of 12 March 1391^w, is, as he says, “ sufficient for oure orizont, compowned after the latitude of Oxenforde^x.” From which words it seems to follow with some degree of evidence, that, as his son Lewis, to whom the performance is addressed, then resided at Oxford^y, so the work itself was written at no great distance from that city.

It may be observed, by the way, that the precise date which Chaucer has assigned to his Conclusions of the Astrolabie, leads to an additional presumption of the warmth and tenderness of his paternal affections. He retired from public life in the course of this year ; we know that on the twenty-second of January he had not yet resigned his office of clerk of the works ; he seems therefore to have

^w p. 442, 443, Urry's Edition.

^x Conclusions of the Astrolabie, Introduction.

^y Vol. II, Chap. XVII, p. 9.

CHAP. LI.

1391.

Visits his
youngest
son at
Oxfo.d.Conclusions
of the
Astro-
labie.Legende of
Gode Wo-
men.

used his first leisure in composing these few pages for the instruction of his youngest boy. We may figure him to ourselves as spending a short time with the "littel Lowys" on his journey from London, conversing with him respecting his studies, and then proceeding to Woodstock. Chaucer sat down in his rural habitation, perhaps the next morning, to compose this little manual of astronomical rudiments, and dedicated the very first fruits of his privacy to the facilitating to this youth of ten years the acquisition of useful and ornamental knowledge.

If we are correct in our conjecture, delivered in the last chapter, respecting the occasion on which Chaucer produced his Legende of Gode Women, it was probably written in the year 1390. It was a tribute of gratitude to the Good Queen Anne, who had obtained for him his liberty and the appointment of clerk of the works. This appointment he did not receive till July 1389: and the Legende will perhaps be confessed by a judicious reader to be too courtly a composition to be likely to have been written

at a distance of sixty miles from London, CHAP. LI.
1391.
by an old man who had renounced the cares, the ambition, and the artificial and interested forms, of the world. It is much more probable that it was composed within perhaps an hundred yards of the residence of majesty, the Old Palace of Westminster.

There is a striking contrast between the feelings with which Chaucer first entered into possession of his house at Woodstock, and those with which he now returned to it. It was given him by Edward III, and the scenery contiguous to it is alluded to in some of his earliest poems. It was here that he commenced the career of ambition. At an early age he was drawn from his academic retreats, or from the obscurity of a private station, and placed under the eye of royalty. He anticipated a gradation of affluence and dignity; and he was not disappointed. He watched the countenance of his sovereigns; he calculated the means of rising to fortune; and, if not a corrupt and a fawning courtier, we may at least believe that he was an enlightened and an assiduous one. He mingled the thoughts of a man looking onward to fortune,

Sentiments
of Chaucer
at this
period.

CHAP. LI. with the vivacity of an unworn frame, and
 1391. the sanguine hopes which almost universally characterise the union of inexperience and talent. He wandered in the country so as not to forget the town ; and he enjoyed the sylvan and the silent scene with the temper of a poet, not that of a hermit.

He was not however long permitted to remain in retirement. He served in the armies of his country. He was employed in negotiations and embassies. Finally, he was fixed in the station of comptroller of the customs ; an appointment which he occupied for twelve years, from the forty-sixth to the fifty-eighth year of his age, and in which he was daily busied with cockets and docketts, and surrounded with " hurry, bustle and confusion on our quays, and sugar-casks, beer-butts ^z and common-councilmen in our streets ^a." It was not till

^z Ale, i. e. some liquor prepared from corn, and qualified with a vegetable bitter, was one of the most usual refreshments of the inhabitants of this island from the time of the Saxons, and is mentioned in their laws. See Wilkins, *Leges Anglo-Saxonicæ*, p. 273.

^a West-Indian, Act. 1.

his labour all done was,
And he 'd made all his rekenynges,

CHAP. LI.

1391.

HOUSE OF FAME, BOOK II, VER. 144.

that he was free to return to his private abode, and to court the muse. From the circumstance of our finding a single grant of the sovereign, indulging him with one month's leave of absence on urgent affairs, we may infer that he was almost perpetually immersed in business, and was in danger of forgetting the fair face of nature.

At length, at the advanced age of sixty-three, he resigned his promotions, and bid an eternal adieu to courts and visits, to business and plans and superintendence and audiences. He thought it high time, having lived so much for the public and for fortune, to live a little for himself. He was desirous to expose himself no longer to the buffets and assaults of calamity. He had probably scarcely seen Woodstock for seventeen years. He began with refreshing his recollections, and revisiting his old acquaintances, the hills, and the streams and the vegetable shade. It

CHAP. LI. is likely that he had planted trees with his
1391, own hands: they had grown so as almost to
baffle his recollection; and that which he had
last seen a twig, now demanded from him
a sort of reverence, a vigorous and hardy tree.
His house had scarcely been tenanted in his
absence, and called forcibly for decoration
and repair. Every thing reminded him of
the silent and unnoticed progress of time.

But, if all that he saw was altered, a still
greater alteration had taken place in his own
breast. He had quitted Woodstock, scarcely
more than thirty, a bold and ardent adven-
turer; he returned to it with more than thirty
years experience of all that the world can
offer, to interest and to gratify, to dazzle and
to mislead. Public and literary honours had
been showered upon him; adversity had
assailed him with some of her fiercest attacks.
He had left Woodstock, to force his way
amidst the crowd of expectants; he returned,
to rest. He had left Woodstock with powers
of the highest promise; he returned, qualified
to produce—the Canterbury Tales.

precision the period of his entering upon this CHAP. LI.
 work. In the *Legende of Gode Women* 1393.

Chaucer appears to have enumerated all his considerable performances then existing, but without any mention of this, his most admirable production. The *Legende* could not have been written previously to the year 1382, the epoch of the marriage of Richard II. to Anne of Bohemia, to whom that work is addressed. It probably was not written till after the year 1389, when Chaucer had already obtained through her interposition his liberty, and the office of clerk of the works. In that case the *Canterbury Tales* could not have been begun sooner than the year 1390.

This is the principal argument which offers itself, enabling us to fix the chronology of this performance. That the name of Jack Straw^b occurs in the tale of the Cock and the Fox, and that the death of Bernabo Visconti duke of Milan^c, which happened in 1385, makes one in the series of tragic

^b ver. 15400. See Tyrwhit, *Discourse*, note 6.

^c ver. 14709. See Tyrwhit, *ad loc.*

CHAP. LI. events touched upon in that of the Monk,
 1393. are indecisive circumstances. The Canterbury Tales was the work of years, and was never completed. The number intended seems to have been sixty; but in Mr. Tyrwhit's edition, whose reasonings upon the genuineness of the tales are entitled to our commendation, there are only twenty-four. There might have occurred in the collection allusions to the deposition of Richard II. and the accession of Henry IV; and this would have furnished no argument as to the period at which the work was undertaken.

Models after
 which they
 were
 formed.

Collections of tales were a favourite species of amusement in this age. On the revival of literature, when the very elements of ancient history were nearly forgotten, it was natural that the inquisitive should be desirous of possessing in a small compass an assemblage of some of its most memorable or interesting passages. This desire gave birth to the compilations of Simeon Seth, of Piers Alfonse, and the *Gesta Romanorum*^d. These however,

^d Vol. I, Chap. II, p. 25.

and the other collections whether of historical CHAP. LI.
or fictitious narratives which succeeded them, 1393.
consisted of parts wholly unconnected with
each other. Boccaccio is understood to have
been the first who endeavoured to reduce a
compilation of this sort into a dramatical form,
by putting his different tales into the mouths Il Deca-
merone.
of imaginary persons, and assigning a par-
ticular event as exciting them to seek amuse-
ment in this way. His persons are individuals
of some rank and education, who had with-
drawn to a rural retreat, for the purpose of
escaping the plague of Florence in 1348.
Mr. Tyrwhit has truly observed^c, that the
plan of Boccaccio, however it might be an
improvement upon the writings of his pre-
decessors, has, beside other disadvantages, that
of being indefinite, the number of ten days,
allotted for the retreat of the parties, being
merely arbitrary; and that the characters of
the personages are so little discriminated, as to
afford small scope for that variety and contrast

^c Discourse, note 2.

CHAP. LI. which are essential to a composition approach-
 1393. ing to the dramatical form.

De Con-
 fessione
 Amantis.

The *De Confessione Amantis* of Gower is, like the principal production of Chaucer, a collection of tales ; but whether he or Chaucer had the precedence in entering upon this species of undertaking has been considered as a matter of doubt. Gower is more careful than Chaucer in assigning the chronology of his work, and has mentioned the sixteenth year of Richard II. as the period of its publication. His performance contains no allusion to the Canterbury Tales, though it mentions their author with commendation ; while Chaucer is supposed, with considerable appearance of reason, to have designed an attack upon Gower in his Prologue to the Man of Lawes Tale^f. It is just therefore to assign the priority to the *De Confessione Amantis*. The

^f See Vol. II, Chap. XVII, p. 32. The allusion to Gower's *De Confessione Amantis* ought to have been stated by Mr. Tyrwhit as a feature of later chronology in the Canterbury Tales, than either Jack Straw's rebellion, or the death of Bernabo duke of Milan.

plan of Gower's work is the confession of a CHAP. LI.
1393.
lover to a priest of Venus, who addresses to him in return many exhortations and instructions, illustrated and inforced by a variety of narratives. This is certainly no improvement, in point of dramatic excellence, upon the outline of Boccaccio. Gower however, is entitled to the praise of having led the way to Chaucer in the idea of comprising a series of tales in a metrical volume. It surely is to be considered as no mean age either in literature or poetry, which produced, nearly at the same time, such poems as Gower's Florent and Apollynus of Tyre, and a collection of such various, and in many respects such exquisite, merit, as Chaucer's Canterbury Tales; not to mention the performance of Langland which has lately engaged our attention.

From these circumstances then it appears that Chaucer had resided at least two years in his retirement at Woodstock before he began the Canterbury Tales. He was inflamed with emulation at reading the *De Confessione Aman-*

Breach between
Chaucer
and
Gower.

CHAP. LI. *tis.* What was the cause of the misunderstanding which took place between him and Gower, it is difficult for us to discover. Gower was especially protected by Thomas of Woodstock ; and Chaucer, as we have seen, suffered greatly from the animosity and persecutions of that nobleman. This however was not the express ground of their difference ; for it was after this that Gower complimented Chaucer upon his Testament of Love. The compliment of Gower proves indeed the kindness of only one of the parties ; it enables us however to infer the kindness of the other. The manner in which Gower mentions the Testament of Love is fortunately such as to evince that, in the sixteenth year of Richard II, the sketch only, and certain passages, of the work existed ; and consequently that it had been communicated only to particular friends, of whom it follows that Gower at the time in which it was written was one. This is evident from the style of prospect and prophecy in which Venus is introduced by Gower, speaking of the work :

And grete well Chaucer—

CHAP. LI.

^s Forthy, nowe in his dayés old,
Thou shalt hym tellé this message,
That he, upon his latter age,
To sette an ende of all his werke
(As he whiche is myn owné clerke),
Do make his Testament of Love,
As thou hast done thy ^h Shryfte above.

1393.

Book VII, fol. 190, verso.

But, though it may be inferred from this extract, that Gower and Chaucer were still friends when Chaucer was a prisoner, and that his illustrious brother-poet was one of Chaucer's visitors and confidential friends in his confinement, it does not follow that they were not now on the eve of the unhappy animosity which afterward took place between them. It would seem rather that Chaucer at first received the visits of his old friend with pleasure, and felt his spirits exhilarated with his kindness. Knowing his connection with the great man in power, he assiduously cul-

Gower
visits
Chaucer
in prison.

^s Therefore.

^h Confession, *Confessio*.

CHAP. LI. tivated his intercourse, opened to him all his
 1393. feelings, and communicated to him his first
 rude sketches of composition. But, when he
 saw that no alleviation to his misfortunes
 flowed from the professed attachment of
 Gower, that no termination to his confinement
 opened upon him, and that after a lapse
 of two years he was permitted to sell his pensions
 for bread, Chaucer then began to view
 his illustrious friend with distrust. It may be
 that Gower was blameless, and that Chaucer's
 obtaining no remission was imputable only
 to the rigid temper of Woodstock; but we
 cannot wonder that Chaucer was slow to
 enter into this idea. No absolute breach took
 place for the present between the poets, but
 the idea of Gower as a specious and fair-
 spoken hypocrite took deep root in Chaucer's
 mind.

Is instigated
 by resentment
 to undertake
 the Canterbury
 Tales.

This being the state of things, it is obvious
 to conceive with what feelings Chaucer re-
 ceived Gower's capital work, the *De Con-
 fessione Amantis*. In another frame of mind
 he would have rejoiced in it, as an effort of
 generous emulation. But, poisoned as his

feelings were toward Gower, he viewed it as CHAP. LI.
a new act of animosity. Gower, who had 1393.
hitherto written only in Latin and French,
appeared in his eyes, not contented with
treacherously betraying the man that loved
him, as now taking up the pen in English
with the base purpose of annihilating his
literary fame. It seems therefore to have
been resentment and indignation that first in-
spired Chaucer at an advanced age with the
admirable project of his *Canterbury Tales*.

There is one remark which suggests itself
upon this very probable history of the mis-
understanding between Chaucer and Gower.
If Chaucer conceived an unfavourable idea of
his friend at the time when that friend's patron
was all-powerful and he was himself a pri-
soner in the Tower, at least he did not then
give vent to his suspicions and his resentment.
Gower seems so little to have considered
Chaucer as his enemy, as to have been in-
duced several years afterward to introduce
into his *De Confessione Amantis* a compliment
to him, in a strain which would seem to us to

CHAP. LI. imply the sincerest friendship. Chaucer how-
 1393. ever regarded the eulogium as a masked hostility ; he was irritated to find the man, who, he thought, had deserted him in adversity, and was now desirous to rob him of his well-earned fame, putting on the semblance of attachment and kindness ; and he resolved to show Gower that, if he were “ in his dayés olde,” and “ upon his latter age,” yet he would not, in publishing his Testament of Love, “ sette an ende of all his werke.”

Anecdote of
 Shake-
 spear.

The breach between Chaucer and Gower has a resemblance to that between Shakespear and Jonson, two of the most eminent English geniuses of the sixteenth century. Jonson was a man of a morose and suspicious temper, and appears to have had frequent altercations with the players, of whom Shakespear was one, probably respecting the performance of his plays. Shakespear, who had had the opportunity of doing a very early kindness to his brother-bard, in procuring the representation of his first production, which had pre-

viously been rejected ⁱ, and who appears after-
 ward to have cultivated his friendship, seems
 at length to have taken up the quarrel of the
 performers. He is supposed to have had in
 his thoughts the corpulence and intemperance
 of Jonson in his *Merry Wives of Windsor*,
 and even to have borrowed in some degree
 the incident of the buck-basket in that play
 from a circumstance which really happened
 to his contemporary^j. It is thus that Jonson

CHAP. LI.
 1393.

ⁱ Life of Shakespear by Rowe. Malone, Chronology of Shakespear's Plays, §. 18, decides that the piece in question was *Every Man in his Humour*.

^j Steevens, Note upon the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act III, Scene iii, 1778. A friend has suggested to me, that this conjecture could not be true, on account of the irreconcilableness of the disgrace which Jonson is said to have sustained, to just chronology: the son of sir Walter Raleigh, whose tutor Jonson is represented to have been, and who is said to have put the trick upon him, not having been old enough at that time for the part he is made to sustain in the transaction. But to this it may be answered, that, if the name of the pupil be erroneous, that does not invalidate the whole story. Nothing is more usual in affairs of this sort, than a change of names, and the substitution of a celebrated person in the room of an obscure one. The authority upon which the incident rests is by no means contemptible; it is extracted by Oldys, an antiquarian

CHAP. LI. expresses himself on the subject, in a copy
1393. of verses written after the exhibition of this
 comedy.

Now, for the players, it is true, I tax'd
 them,

And yet but some; and those so sparingly,
 As all the rest might have sat still, unques-
 tion'd.

————— What th' have done 'gainst me
 I am not mov'd with. If it gave 'em meat,
 Or got 'em cloths, 'tis well: that was their
 end.

Only amongst them, I am sorry for
 Some better natures, by the rest so drawn,
 To run in that vile line ^k.

But, whatever were the original merits of this

of high character, from the note-book of Mr. Oldisworth secretary to Philip earl of Pembroke, who was nearly a contemporary of the parties. Add to which, the harmony of dates between the offence and the resentment; the play of the Merry Wives of Windsor being entered upon the Stationers' Books for January 1601, and the Poetaster having been first acted in the course of that year.

^k Apology annexed to the Poetaster.

unhappy breach, it partook, in the sequel, of CHAP. LI.
1393.
the usual fate of things of this nature, and, once made, was still aggravated with new hostilities. Jonson, in his *Poetaster*, his *Bartholomew-Fair*, and his *Staple of News*, written after their estrangement, has repeatedly attacked Shakespear; and Shakespear, on the other hand, who in his will bestows legacies upon many of his old connections, bequeaths no remembrance to Jonson. It was not till the great interpreter of nature was laid among the dead, that the generous feelings of the learned dramatist revived, and he did liberal justice to his competitor in his *Discoveries*, and in the *Commendatory Verses* prefixed to the folio edition of Shakespear's Works.

It is singular, and in some degree worthy of our reflection, that, in both these quarrels, that of Chaucer, and that of Shakespear, it was the more excellent of the two parties, so far as the particulars of the misunderstandings can now be traced, that must be called the aggressor.

The Orlando Furioso of the greatest poet of modern Italy is, like Chaucer's principal Canterbury
Tales
compared

CHAP. LI.

1393.

with the
Orlando
Furioso.

work, a tissue of independent stories, artificially connected. It has greatly the advantage of the Canterbury Tales in point of language : the style being pure, unaffected, spirited and harmonious ; and the Italian tongue having received perhaps no essential improvement since the time of Ariosto. This renders his admired production, in the strict sense of the term, a classic. But, whatever be the merit of the Italian poem either in ornament or execution, it falls far short of the English in the skilful adoption of a plan. Ariosto's independent heroes distract the attention, and painfully divide the interest ; and his mode of successively breaking one story in the middle, to take up the thread of another, will always render the first reading of his work, which ought to be the most delightful, a species of task. And, as to the question of language, if a modern and polished speech have its advantage with the multitude of readers, an antiquated tongue, with its strong associations of memory, its venerable air, and an old-age affording it the charms of rareness and novelty, will always possess a peculiar interest

with readers of the highest cultivation and taste. CHAP. LI.

1393.

Plan of the
perform-
ance.

The Canterbury Tales, like those of Boccaccio, are connected by being put into the mouths of a number of imaginary relaters, who rehearse them in turn for their common amusement. But Chaucer has fortunately chosen a characteristic occasion for assembling his personages. A plague, like that of Florence in 1348, is a mere casualty, which might have occurred in almost any country or any age ; it has no relation to manners : while Chaucer's pilgrims, collected in the metropolis, and proceeding toward the shrine of St. Thomas of Becket, immediately carry us back, in their figure, their tempers, their pursuits and their sentiments, to the remoter period in which the work was written. The personages also of the English poet are skillfully varied ; they are not mere gentlemen and ladies, like those of the Decamerone. His thirty pilgrims are a medley of persons such as we should naturally suppose collected together for the object they have in view,

CHAP. LI. and who had probably for their principle of
1393. association no other motive, than that, by being thus formed into a caravan, they might be more secure against that species of attack so much to be apprehended in rude and unsettled times. Chaucer, having drawn his persons from so various classes of society, has presented us with a very copious picture of the manners then prevailing in England ; and, as some of them are honourable, proud or severe, and others prone to broad humour and buffoonery, he is furnished with a natural opportunity for exhibiting a great variety of talent. His knight entertains us with a splendid tale of chivalry ; his monk takes occasion to display his various reading ; his prioress is superstitious ; his persone moral ; and his man of lawe and his doctour of physike grave, specious and demure. If he is inclined to relieve the monotony of his performance by introducing tales of a broader vein, he is not obliged, like Boccaccio, against every principle of the dramatic art, to put them into the mouths of the sober and the

decent, but has at hand his miller, his reve CHAP. LI.
 and his shipman, from whom we should 1393.
 naturally expect discourse of a rougher cast.

A painful incident arises in this part of the story. Chaucer had not been more than twelve months engaged in composing his Canterbury Tales, when he found it necessary to apply to the crown for some increase to his resources ; a sure proof that, whatever other benefits he might have derived from his public employments, he had not made them the means of accumulating an independent fortune. It is probable, considering the veneration in which learning and talents were at this time held, and recollecting the temper and conduct of Petrarca and Chaucer's other literary contemporaries on the continent, that the English poet also rather claimed this provision as his due, than sued for it in the tone of a suppliant. If we could find a petition presented by him on this occasion, it is likely that we should see him describing the long and faithful services he had rendered to the crown, his unmerited misfortunes, his advanced age, and the gigantic undertaking in

1394.
 Chaucer
 again ob-
 tains a
 pension.

CHAP. LI. which, in spite of both, he was now engaged,
1394. and respecting which he perhaps, soberly, not arrogantly, expressed a hope, that it might do credit to the patronage of his king, and place the literature of his country upon a level with that of the most fortunate of the surrounding nations. The result was that the king granted him, on the last day of February 1394, a pension of twenty (in modern money three hundred and sixty) pounds *per annum* for the remainder of his life ¹.

¹ Appendix, No. XXIII.

CHAP. LII.

MARRIAGE OF JOHN OF GAUNT WITH CATHERINE SWINFORD.—CHAUCER REMOVES TO DONNINGTON.—REENGAGED IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS.—OBTAINS A PATENT OF PROTECTION.—RECEIVES A GRANT OF WINE.

THERE is another spot of English ground, CHAP. LII. beside Woodstock, which has been consecrated to readers of taste and imagination, by a traditional connection with the name of Chaucer. This is Donnington-Castle near Newbury in the county of Berks. That the argument in support of this connection may be placed in its true light, we will review the authorities upon which it rests, in chronological order.

Evidences
that
Chaucer
resided
at Don-
nington.

The oldest of our English antiquaries is Leland. Leland, who wrote in the reign of Henry VIII.

CHAP. LII. Though in his account of the life of Chaucer he does not mention Donnington, he may fairly be considered as referring jointly to Woodstock and to this place, when he says that “there are certain reasons which incline him to believe that the poet was a native either of the county of Oxford, or of that of Berks ^a.”

Camden. Camden is a writer of the reign of Elizabeth. Speaking of Donnington, he says, “It is a small but elegant castle, situated upon the brow of a well-wooded hill, having an agreeable prospect, and being very light with windows on all sides. It is said to have been built by sir Richard Adderbury [Abberbury] knight, who likewise founded beneath it an hospital for the poor, called a God’s House : it was afterward a dwelling of Chaucer, and then of the De la Poles ; and in our fathers’ memory came into the hands of Charles Brandon duke of Suffolk ^b.”

^a Scriptores Britannici, Cap. DV.

^b Britannia : Attrebatii, Barkshjre.

Speght, a contemporary of Camden, but CHAP. LII.
 who wrote after him, quotes the above pas- Speght.
 sage in part, and then adds, “Donnington
 Castle standeth in a parke in Barkshire not
 far from Newbery, where to this day standeth
 an olde oke called Chaucers Oke.”

Evelyn, the author of a work of con- Evelyn.
 siderable reputation, called *Sylva*, or a Dis-
 course of Forest-Trees, published in the year
 1664, has the following interesting detail, in
 that part of his work which relates to the oak.
 “Nor are we to over-pass those memorable
 trees which so lately flourished in Denning-
 ton Park neer Newberry: amongst which
 three were most remarkable from the inge-
 nious planter, and dedicator (if tradition hold),
 the famous English bard, Jeofry Chaucer, of
 which one was called the Kings, another the
 Queens, and a third Chaucers-Oak. The
 first of these was fifty foot in height before
 any bough or knot appeared, and cut five
 foot square at the butt end, all clear timber.

* Speght, *Life of Chaucer*: his children.

CHAP. LII. The Queens was felled since the wars, and held forty foot excellent timber, straight as an arrow in growth and grain, and cutting four foot at the stub, and neer a yard at the top; besides a fork of almost ten foot clear timber above the shaft, which was crowned with a shady tuft of boughs, amongst which, some were on each side curved like ramshorns, as if they had been so industriously bent by hand. This oak was of a kind so excellent, cutting a grain clear as any clap-board^d (as appeared in the wainscot which was made thereof), that a thousand pities it is some seminary of the acorns had not been propagated, to preserve the species. Chaucers Oak, though it were not of these dimensions, yet was it a very goodly tree^e.”

Ashmole. Ashmole, an antiquary of the same age with the author last quoted, says of Donnington-Castle, that it “ was erected by sir Richard de Adderbury; and, in process of

^d The wood which is used for constructing casks, so called.

^e Chap. XXIX, §. 12.

time, became the seat of sir Geoffry Chau- CHAP. LII.
 cer, the prince of English poetry, who com-
 posed many of his celebrated pieces under an
 oak in the park ^f.”

The author of the Life of Chaucer, pre- Life pre-
fixed to
Urry's
Edition of
Chaucer.
 fixed to Urry's edition of his works, repeats
 the information of Camden, Evelyn and Ash-
 mole, and then adds, “ In this pleasant re-
 tirement Chaucer spent the few last years
 of his life, living in honour, and esteemed
 by all, famous for his learning, not only in
 England, but in foreign countries.”

Lastly, Mr. Grose, the author of the An- Grose.
 tiquities of England and Wales ^g, collected in
 the present reign, has added to our inform-
 ation these circumstances; that Donnington
 was purchased by “ Walter Abberbury from
 Edward II. for one hundred shillings; that
 sir Richard Abberbury obtained a licence to
 rebuild the castle towards the latter part of
 the reign of Richard II; that Chaucer pur-
 chased it of the son of sir Richard; and that

^f Antiquities of Berkshire, Vol. II.

^g Vol. I.

CHAP. LIJ. he retired hither about the year 1397." In the beginning of this enumeration Mr. Grose quotes a manuscript in the Cotton library as his authority ; but, as he has failed to specify the manuscript, or to mention how many of his facts are drawn from it, it is impossible for us exactly to decide what degree of credit is due to his statement.

Objections. On the whole, we should conceive there to be a chain of evidence in the above detail, such as might well authorise a fixed opinion that Chaucer actually inhabited the castle at Donnington. There are however some particulars, which to a certain degree weaken this evidence.

from records
concerning
the former
proprietor.

Mr. Grose mentions that sir Richard Abberbury obtained a licence to rebuild the castle toward the latter part of the reign of Richard II^h. What faith ought to be given to this assertion I am unable to pronounce. There is however a patent from that prince

^h Leland also represents sir R. Abberbury as the founder of the castle of Donnington. Itinerary, Vol. III, fol. 96.

to sir Richard, dated 26 April 1393, per-CHAP. LII.
 mitting him to build and endow the hospital
 already mentionedⁱ. He also founded in the
 same year, and near the same spot, a monas-
 tery of Trinitarian Friars^k. We do not know
 when the founder of these establishments
 died: but their erection, or, still more, the
 rebuilding of the castle, are not circumstances
 which we should expect immediately to pre-
 cede the alienation of the domain. Mr.
 Tyrwhit^l is the first person who has applied
 the patent of 1393 to the illustration of the
 life of Chaucer. It was therefore perhaps
 from some other and distinct consideration
 that the writer of the life in Urry's edition
 and Mr. Grose were induced to consider
 Chaucer as spending only the few last years
 of his life in this retirement.

The circumstances of Chaucer himself
 might also be considered as rendering it
 somewhat improbable that he made such an

and from
 Chaucer's
 pecuniary
 circum-
 stances.

ⁱ Monasticon Anglicanum, Vol. II, p. 474.

^k Tanner, Notitia Monastica: Berkshire, VII, 1.

^l Preface, Appendix C, note 1.

CHAP. LII.

acquisition toward the close of his life. Many arguments forbid us to believe that he retired from public life with an opulent fortune. While a prisoner in the Tower, he complains that his "worldly godes were fulliche dispen-
pente." In 1391 he ceased to be a place-
man. In 1394 he obtained a new pension
of twenty pounds *per annum*; a strong pre-
sumption that he was not at this period much
at ease in his fortune.

Chaucer did
not plant
the oaks at
Donning-

Mr. Grose has justly remarked that, if
Chaucer purchased Donnington in 1397, he
could not have "studied under an oak of
his own planting in that place." This how-
ever affords no material objection to the
notion of his having possessed the estate.
The circumstances related by Evelyn re-
specting the oaks, clearly prove that they did
not receive their names, till their character
and dimensions were determined. Chaucer,
though a poet, we may believe was not
enough of a prophet to enable him in the
acorn to pay so courtly a compliment, and
to contrive that the King's Oak should be
larger than the Queen's, and the Queen's

larger than his own. He found them on the CHAP. LII. estate, and gave them such names as pleased him. This too best agrees with the scientific remark of Evelyn^m, that the time from Chaucer to the civil wars of Charles I. seems too short for the oaks to have attained the dimensions he describes. Add to which, Speght, in the reign of Elizabeth, says that Chaucer's Oak was at that time an old tree.

In conclusion, the chain of direct evidence Inference. seems too strong to be overthrown by such presumptions, from the building of sir Richard Abberbury, or the circumstances of Chaucer, as have been opposed to it. We may therefore on the whole indulge our veneration for Donnington Castle, and walk among its ruins tracing the footsteps of the poet, without danger of subjecting ourselves to the empire of a delusion.

The little narrative of Evelyn, taken in this point of view, is exceedingly agreeable. We rejoice to find that the oaks which

^m ubi supra.

CHAP. LII. Chaucer loved, and upon which he bestowed names, were among the most admirable of their species. The wainscot with a "grain as clear as any clap-board," that was made from them, was pleasing to our ancestors to view, and may be pleasing to us to remember. The man of taste, as well as the naturalist, will join with Evelyn, in wishing that a "seminary of these acorns had been propagated." The story too illustrates the character of Chaucer, and coincides with every thing we know of the excellence of his disposition. When he retired from courts and cities, it was not in the temper of a misanthrope. When he reclined at seventy years of age under the shadow of his own oaks, he still called to mind with delight the kind and honourable interposition of the queenⁿ in

ⁿ The queen to whom this oak was dedicated was probably Anne of Bohemia, who died on the seventh of June 1394, (Walsingham, ad ann.), but who left behind her a character inexpressibly dear both to the king and the nation : Chaucer may be supposed to have consecrated this tree to her memory. Richard II. was again contracted in marriage, October 1396, to Isabella, daughter of Charles VI. king of France, who was at that time in the eighth year of her age.

his behalf, and the placability of his sovereign. It follows that he was happy, and descended into the vale of years with cheerful feelings, and a mind that willingly called back to recollection past scenes and the connections in which he had formerly been placed. CHAP. LII.

The coincidence is worthy of our attention between Chaucer's acquisition of Donnington, and the third marriage of his patron, the duke of Aquitaine. In July 1394 the Spanish consort of John of Gaunt departed this life°. 1394.
Death of
Constance
second duchess of
Lancaster.

We have already seen that this prince had been now for nearly twenty years on terms of the most intimate connection with Catherine lady Swinford, the sister of Chaucer's wife. This lady had borne him three sons, afterward known by the titles of the earl of Somerset, cardinal Beaufort, and the duke of Exeter; from the eldest of whom were lineally descended the princes of the house of Tudor, and all the sovereigns who from the close of

° Walsingham and Knighton, ad ann.

CHAP. LII. the fifteenth century have swayed the sceptre
 1394. of England.

1396.
 John of
 Gaunt
 marries
 the sister
 of Chau-
 cer's wife.

John of Gaunt, whose mind was instinct with the domestic and social affections, had nothing now more nearly at heart, than the desire of making a respectable establishment, and providing in the most effectual manner, for this doubtful branch of his personal relations. A familiarity of twenty years had not abated his esteem and affection for the mother; and the children, who afterward made a considerable figure in the history of their country, may be supposed to have daily unfolded more of those qualities which might give them a strong and irresistible claim upon their father's providence and care. Accordingly, in January 1396, he publicly espoused Catherine Swinford the mother^p; and in the following year obtained an act of parliament legitimating by name the children she had borne him previously to this solemnity^q. In

^p Stow and Collins, ad ann.

^q Cotton, 20 R. 2. Parl. History, ad ann.

the same year John, the eldest, was created CHAP. LII.
 earl of Somerset^r, and in the next Henry, 1397.
 the second, was elected bishop of Lincoln^s.

Having thus paid the homage he thought due to the woman to whom he had so long been attached, and laid a foundation for the splendid fortune of her offspring, the duke of Aquitaine looked a little further. He had taken to wife a person of a rank inferior to his own, and he now resolved, with that magnificence of proceeding which was congenial to his habits, that no one who was related to her should be left in a situation which might be thought disproportioned to the alliance she had contracted. Of the history of Thomas Swinford, her only son by her former husband, nothing is known. Probably the only other relations she had in England were the family of Chaucer. To them therefore John of Gaunt, who had so long patronised the

Favours bestowed by him upon the family of Chaucer.

^r Ditto. From the Parliamentary History it appears, that the earl of Somerset received at the same time a pension of £. 20 *per annum*, as the appendage of his title.

^s Godwin: Episc. Lincoln. cap. xix.

CHAP. LII. poet, resolved still further to extend his protection and munificence. The brother-in-law of Catherine Swinford, though he had passed through several public employments, was still, it may be, according to the ideas of the times, a plebeian: The duke of Aquitaine determined, in the feudal sense, to ennoble him; that is, to make him the proprietor of a domain which should constitute him a tenant in chief of the crown. For this purpose he purchased and bestowed upon Chaucer the estate of Donnington Castle. Nor was this a gift unworthy of the first prince of the blood to bestow upon a person so nearly allied to him. The mansion had lately been rebuilt, was elegant, cheerful, and agreeably situated. It was afterward reckoned among the more considerable possessions of the De la Poles dukes of Suffolk, and in the sequel was thought worthy to be bestowed by Henry VIII. as a residence for his brother-in-law. The coincidence of time renders it highly probable that this was the mode in which Chaucer came into possession of Donnington. Mr. Grose says that "he retired hither about

1397," the very year in which the children of John of Gaunt by Catherine Swinford were legitimated; and several circumstances, already mentioned, show that Mr. Grose's date is nearly right. CHAP. LII.
1397.

Other particulars may be added, strongly tending to confirm this hypothesis. On the twentieth of March 1399, a few weeks after the death of John of Gaunt, Richard II. granted to Thomas Chaucer a pension for life, in lieu of certain offices which had been bestowed upon him by the deceased prince, but which Richard had now transferred to his favourite minister, the earl of Wiltshire^t. This grant was confirmed by Henry IV. on his accession^u; who also bestowed upon Thomas Chaucer the offices of constable of Wallingford Castle^v, sheriff of Oxfordshire for life^x, and chief butler to the household^y.

^t This grant is recited, Pat. 1 Hen. 4, p. 1, m. 10.

^u Pat. 1 Hen. 4, ut supra.

^x Records, apud Speght.

^y The author of the Life of Chaucer prefixed to Urry's Edition, represents Thomas Chaucer as having been first appointed to the office of chief butler in the twenty-second year

CHAP. LII. It can therefore scarcely be doubted that the
1397. duke of Aquitaine acted on the principle of making the fortune of his wife's relations, and that Henry IV, his eldest son, prosecuted the same plan. It is in the second year of this prince that we find Thomas Chaucer first elected to the office of speaker of the house of commons. His talents, we may suppose, perfectly qualified him for this situation ; but it seems nearly certain that he was originally indebted for it to this marriage, by which he was brought into so near an alliance to the race of his sovereigns.

of Richard II. I believe this is not true ; though I have not thought it a question of sufficient importance, to require the looking through the patents of successive years to ascertain when he first obtained the office. The *Calendarium Rotulorum Patentium*, lately published by authority of parliament (a most imperfect and wretched performance), ascribes it to the fourth year of Henry IV ; and I find one John Payn (Pat. 1 Hen. 4 ; p. 1, m. 27) nominated to this employment on the thirtieth of September 1399, that is, on the very day of the accession of that monarch. It is not probable that, if Richard had bestowed the employment upon Thomas Chaucer, Henry would have made it one of the first acts of his reign to deprive him of it.

One of the most curious particulars in the concluding part of the history of the life of Chaucer is a patent of protection granted him by Richard II, of the date of the twelfth of May 1398². It has been supposed that this grant was made in reference to some embarrassment in the circumstances of the poet. There is however nothing in the terms of the patent, which necessarily leads to this construction. It is stated in the preamble that the king had ordained Chaucer to perform and expedite many arduous and urgent affairs of the crown, as well in presence as absence of the king, in various parts of the kingdom. The instrument then goes on to state Chaucer as apprehensive lest, in discharging the employments which the king has been pleased to impose upon him, he should be interrupted, molested, or impleaded, by certain persons, not named in the instrument, his competitors, by means of various quarrels and factions which they might

CHAP. LII.

1398.

Chaucer receives a patent of protection from the crown.

² Appendix, No. XXIV.

CHAP. LII. excite against him. The king, in consequence
1398. of Chaucer's representations in this point, has thought proper to take him, his servants, lands, goods, rents, and property of every description, under his protection; and by this patent requires his bailiffs and faithful subjects to maintain, protect and defend Chaucer, his servants, estates and effects, from all arrests and prosecutions, pleas of the crown only excepted, for the term of two years from the date of this patent.

The real meaning of this deed must now perhaps remain a mystery for ever. From certain phrases which occur in it we might be inclined to regard it, as it has hitherto been regarded by the editors of his works, as a protection from his creditors. There are however various clauses and terms which do not seem, at least to a reader of the present day, such as it was natural to employ in an affair of that sort. It does not appear why his creditors should have excited quarrels and factions [*querelas sive sectas*] against him, nor should we expect his butcher and his baker to be styled in a public deed his com-

petitors [*æmulos suos*]. In a word we are de- CHAP. LII.
1398.
stitute of documents to enable us to ascertain, either what were the many arduous and urgent affairs of the crown in which Chaucer was at this time employed, or what the perplexing and vexatious circumstances that made it important to him to obtain for two years an exemption from all arrests and prosecutions.

Thus much however, if any faith is to be given to the plain meaning and construction of words in a deed of this sort, is certain, that Chaucer, after seven years retirement, and being at this time seventy years of age, was now once more engaged in public life. What was the nature of the affairs in which he was employed it seems impossible to discover; but it must have been no trivial concern that could authorise the description of “a great variety of arduous and urgent political transactions, to be performed and expedited by Chaucer, as well in presence as absence of the king, in various parts of the realm;” or that should have made it probable, supposing these phrases to relate rather

Chaucer
again en-
gaged in
public
affairs.

CHAP. LII. to the affairs in question than to Chaucer's
1398. private situation, that he would, on their account, "be disquieted, molested or impleaded, by certain persons his competitors, and vexed with suits, complaints and hostility."

The true construction therefore of this grant of protection seems to be in a great degree opposite to the sense in which it has hitherto been understood, and to imply rather the present eminence of Chaucer, than that he was now obscured or obliged to conceal himself. The "many arduous and urgent affairs in which the king at this time employed him," show that he was now of too much importance, or in too great a degree of favour at court, to allow him, even at seventy years of age, to enjoy his privacy in the county of Berks. His being thus called back into public life, as well as the elegant and perhaps splendid retreat of which he could call himself master, was probably the immediate consequence of the marriage which the duke of Aquitaine had contracted with his kinswoman. We may suppose it to have been partly owing to Chaucer's being thus

reengaged in public business, and partly it CHAP. LII.
 may be to his removal to a new residence 1398.
 and mode of life on the event of John of
 Gaunt's marriage, that the Canterbury Tales
 were left in the imperfect and unfinished
 state in which we have received them ^a.

It was perhaps to reward Chaucer for the
 assiduity with which he discharged the busi-
 ness here referred to, that he received, in the
 autumn of the same year, a grant of a tun
 of wine yearly, to be delivered to him by the
 king's chief butler, in the port of London ^b.

Obtains a
 grant of
 wine.

^a It ought to be observed that the house is supposed still to exist, or an inn built upon the site of it, from which the personages of the Canterbury Tales set out upon their pilgrimage. The sign has been converted, by a confusion of speech, from the Tabard, "a slevelesse coate worne in times past by noblemen in the warres, but now onely by Heraults (see Speght, Glossary, in voc.)," into the Talbot, a species of hound; and the following inscription is to be found on the spot: "*This is the inn, where Geoffrey Chaucer and nine-and-twenty pilgrims lodged on their journey to Canterbury, in 1383.*" The inscription is truly observed by Mr. Tyrwhit to be modern, and of little authority: Discourse, note 6.

^b Appendix, No. XXV.

CHAP. LII. Two remarks suggest themselves on comparing this grant of wine with the grant of a similar nature which Chaucer received in the late reign. In the first place, the present amounted in value to scarcely more than half as much as the grant bestowed upon him at the time that his patron, John of Gaunt, had the supreme direction of affairs : three hundred and sixty-five *pychers*, or gallons, the amount of the grant of 1374, being nearly equivalent to four pipes, or two tuns*. Secondly, the wine of 1374 was appointed to be delivered daily to Chaucer in the port of London, but the wine given in the present grant was to be delivered annually only, in the month of December. As therefore the inference is strong in the former instance that Chaucer resided in London, so it is probable, considering the two grants together, that the latter was constructed, in the contemplation at least of his future residence at some di-

* See Chap. XXXVI, Vol. II, p. 491.

stance from the metropolis. Chaucer had CHAP. LII
perhaps by this time concluded the business, 1398.
whatever it was, to which his patent of pro-
tection refers.

CHAP. LIII.

ASSASSINATION OF THOMAS OF WOODSTOCK.—
 BANISHMENT OF HENRY OF BOLINGBROKE.—
 DEATH OF JOHN OF GAUNT.—DEPOSITION OF
 RICHARD II.—BEHAVIOUR OF CHAUCER ON THAT
 EVENT.—FAVOURED BY THE NEW SOVEREIGN.
 —REMOVES TO LONDON.

CHAP.
 LIII.

1396.
 Second mar-
 riage of
 Richard
 II.

THE government of Richard II. had been conducted on the whole with considerable mildness and temper, from the period of his resuming the royal authority in May 1389. It however gained no accession of stability; the personal character of the king was weak, fickle, effeminate and indolent; and his time was principally spent in low excesses and prodigal debauchery. His chief rival and most dangerous competitor at this time, Tho-

mas of Woodstock, was of a disposition more congenial than that of Richard to the times in which he lived, rough, boisterous and enterprising, animated with a boundless ambition, and rich in plans and talents for the gratification of this passion. About the time of the third marriage of John of Gaunt, Richard also formed a contract of marriage with Isabella, daughter to the king of France, then seven years of age; and one of the conditions of the contract was a truce of thirty years between the two countries^a. No measure could be more laudable; England had long been vexed with inglorious and indecisive hostilities; but Woodstock, who saw himself excluded from all share in the government, gladly took occasion from this circumstance, to harangue on all occasions respecting the glories of Edward III. and the Black Prince, and the imbecility of their descendant; and to form a party against the crown^b.

CHAP.
LIII.

1396.

Truce for
thirty
years.^a Rymer, Tom. VII, 19 Ric. 2, Mar. 11.^b Froissart, Vol. IV, Chap. lxxxvi.

CHAP.
LIII.

1397.
Conspiracy
of Thomas
of Wood-
stock.

Punishment
of conspi-
rators.
September.

What was the extent of the projects of Thomas of Woodstock it is difficult to decide. The archbishop of Canterbury, his brother the earl of Arundel, and Beauchamp earl of Warwick, were embarked in the conspiracy. Richard however had such intelligence as to enable him to forestal their proceedings; and they and their confederates were surprised and taken into custody^c. A parliament was summoned to determine upon their fate; and the duke of Aquitaine, who as hereditary great steward of England presided at their trials, by so doing gave a sanction to the proceedings of government. The archbishop, who was first arraigned, in consideration of his station received sentence only of perpetual banishment; the earl of Arundel, who demeaned himself on his trial with an undaunted firmness, was dragged immediately from Westminster Hall to Tower Hill, and there executed; and the earl of Warwick, by expressing great humiliation

^c Rymer, Tom. VIII, 21 Ric. 2, Jul. 15.

and penitence, succeeded to have his sentence commuted from death to perpetual imprisonment^d. All the offenders, agreeably to the irregular and lawless spirit of the times, were arraigned, not for the new conspiracy, which could alone justify their punishment, but for the share they had taken in the usurpation of 1386; a guilt which length of time, as well as repeated pardons from the crown, might have seemed to have obliterated. In fact, men were little studious, in this age, of the formalities of legal proceedings, and adverted little to the danger of their violences being drawn into a precedent. It was enough for them, that the crime of the accused was regarded as publicly notorious, and that the proceedings by which they were cut off, were solemn and in the face of day.

CHAP.
LIII.
1397.

But a worse proceeding remained behind. The king's uncle, the leader of the conspiracy, was not brought to trial with the rest. He

Assassin-
ation of
their
leader.

^d Cotton, 21 Ric. 2. Parl. Hist. ad ann.

CHAP.
LIII.

1397.

was too much a favourite with the nation ; and government did not venture to arraign and execute him in the metropolis of his country. It was recollected that the beheading of Thomas earl of Lancaster, first prince of the blood, had been the signal for the deposition of Edward II, though he had been taken in arms against his sovereign. Richard however adopted a way perhaps still more dangerous. Immediately after the arrest of Thomas of Woodstock, he had transported him to Calais ; and, an order being now issued to the governor of that fortress to bring him to London to trial, the answer returned was that he had suddenly died in custody^c. It may be believed that John of Gaunt, who had given his countenance to the public proceedings against the conspirators, was by no means privy of this : the younger, the more precipitate, and more confidential counsellors of Richard, must have been those who advised him to

^c Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra.

a measure, which soon after terminated in his destruction. CHAP.
LIII.

A government, which has recourse to assassination as its means of defence, forfeits all its peculiar advantages, and is the great adversary of its own stability. In these turbulent times in particular, the leading nobility of England felt that this was a precedent peculiarly perilous to themselves. They were originally little disposed to submit to the curb of authority; and the new situation which was thus created, rendered them still more furious and ungovernable. The parliament which had been summoned at Westminster for the trial of Woodstock and his confederates, was adjourned after a session of twelve days, and met again at Shrewsbury in the commencement of the following year. Here a fierce and public quarrel broke out between Henry of Bolingbroke eldest son to John of Gaunt, and Thomas Mowbray duke of Norfolk, the lineal descendant and representative of Thomas of Brotherton younger son to Edward I, to whom, as governor of Calais, the custody of Thomas of Woodstock had

1398.
Quarrel between
Henry of
Bolingbroke and
Thomas
Mowbray
duke of
Norfolk.
January.

CHAP. been committed; each charging the other
LIII.
with the most treasonable designs ^f.

1398.

There is great obscurity in the whole of this story. It is almost impossible to guess at the motives of the contending parties, or to form any tolerable solution respecting the strange proceeding by which Richard thought proper to terminate the affair. In the Parliament Rolls, Bolingbroke is represented as the accuser, charging Mowbray with having sounded him respecting some project of sedition, with complaining of the tyrannical and sanguinary proceedings against the associates of Woodstock, and with asserting that no one could be confident of his safety under such a government as the present. Froissart, who appears to speak from minute information, reverses all this, makes Mowbray the accuser, and Bolingbroke the party charged with disaffection. In comparing these authorities, the records have undoubtedly the highest claim to belief, unless

^f Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra. Froissart, Chap. xcii.

we could suppose that, in the lawless revolution which followed, even they were vitiated by the unscrupulous craft of the usurper. Add to which, it is sufficiently singular, that the exact words which the Parliament Rolls put into the mouth of Bolingbroke, Froissart puts into that of Mowbray ; a coincidence which we should scarcely have expected, if his narrative had been founded upon rumour only.

It is somewhat improbable, whichever way we take it, that any such private conversation, as we find each of these parties ready to lay to the charge of the other, ever took place. Mowbray was implicated in the reproach of the murder of Thomas of Woodstock: it is therefore very unlikely that he should have opened his lips to the nephew and brother-in-law^s of Woodstock, in the way of complaint on that subject ; nor is it a whit more probable that Bolingbroke would have selected him for his confident.

^s Henry of Bolingbroke and Thomas of Woodstock had married sisters, coheirresses of the family of Bohun, earls of Hereford.

CHAP.
LIII.

1398.

Let us suppose then that the accusation, from whichever party it came, was altogether a forgery. Mowbray was a confidential minister and trusted agent of Richard II; Bolingbroke might be desirous of effecting his death or banishment: yet, judging according to our notions, a solemn public duel would seem a very inartificial method for accomplishing that purpose. There is somewhat more probability that the accusation and defiance should have come from Mowbray, who had more to fear from Bolingbroke than Bolingbroke could fear from him, and who, as possessing the royal ear, might suppose that he could turn the sequel of the transaction in any way he pleased.—It was determined at Shrewsbury by the royal authority, that the truth of the accusation should be tried by duel, and Coventry was the place ultimately fixed upon for the decision.

Nothing could be more fatal in its consequences than the conduct adopted by Richard in the sequel of this business. An immense assembly met at Coventry pursuant

to the royal appointment. The lists being set, and the combatants prepared, the king suddenly interfered, and commanded them to desist; then pronouncing against Mowbray a sentence of banishment for life, and against Bolingbroke for ten years^h. This decision is said to have been sanctioned by a committee of twelve peers and six commoners to whom the parliament of Shrewsbury had delegated its authority, probably for the termination of this very affair, and of which the duke of Aquitaine was one. Bolingbroke however, who appears to have conceived a deep resentment for the murder of Thomas of Woodstock, was driven by this measure to inexpiable hatred. Yet, with the smoothness and plausibility which belonged to his character, he exhibited such marks of submission in their parting interview, that Richard was softened, and took that occasion to remit to him four, of the ten, years of his exileⁱ.

CHAP.
LIII.

1398.
Both the
combat-
ants or-
dered into
banish-
ment.

^h Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra.

ⁱ Cotton, Parl. History, and Froissart, ubi supra.

CHAP.
LIII.

Death of
John of
Gaunt.
February 3.

Supposed
particulars
of this
event.

The last support of the tottering throne of Richard II. was taken away by the death of John of Gaunt in the beginning of the following year^j.

The spleen of the church, which pursued this prince through life, followed him even in death, and gave birth to a malicious story respecting the cause of his decease, which has lately been revived by the sinister and ill-omened industry of certain naturalists and antiquarians^k. A doctor of the church, by name Thomas Gascoigne, has left a document on this subject in which he thus expresses himself^l. “ *Novi ego, magister Thomas Gascoigne, licet indignus, sacræ theologiæ doctor, qui hæc scripsi et collegi, diversos viros, qui mortui fuerunt ex putrefactione membrorum suorum genitalium et corporis sui; quæ corruptio et putrefactio, ut ipsi dixerunt, causata fuit per exercitium copulæ carnalis cum mulieribus.*

^j Walsingham and Otterbourne, ad ann.

^k Philosophical Transactions, Vol. XXXI, No. 365, Art. 2, anno 1720. Andrews, History of Great Britain, Vol. I.

^l Dictionarium Theologicum, apud MSS. in Linc. Coll. Oxon. quoted in the above.

Magnus enim dux in Anglia, scilicet J. de Gaunt, mortuus est ex tali putrefactione membrorum genitalium et corporis sui, causata per frequentationem mulierum. Magnus enim fornicator fuit, ut in toto regno Angliæ divulgabatur; et ante mortem suam, jacens sic infirmus in lecto, eandem putrefactionem regi Angliæ, Ricardo Secundo, ostendit, cum idem rex eundem ducem in sua infirmitate visitavit; et dixit mihi qui ista novit, unus fidelis sacræ theologiæ baccalaureus." CHAP.
LIII.
1399.

This curious story has been ingeniously employed to vindicate the discoverers of America from the charge of introducing into Europe the most venomous of diseases.

To judge of the credibility of this statement it is necessary we should consider by whom, and under what circumstances, it was made. The author was a distinguished member of the university of Oxford in the middle of the fifteenth century, having died in the year 1457, and having twice filled the office of chancellor there^m. Refuted. This was the period

^m Wood, Antiq. Oxon., Coll. Oriense, Scriptorum.

CHAP. in which the most strenuous exertions were
 LIII.
 made for the suppression of the doctrines of
 1399. Wicliffe; and Gascoigne was among the most
 zealous in these exertions. Oxford, as we
 have already seenⁿ, had during the life of
 this reformer been deeply infected with the
 taint of heresy, and even many years after
 his death was still the favourite resort of his
 followers^o. In the year 1406 a testimonial
 was drawn up, in favour of the character,
 learning, and piety of Wicliffe, in the name
 of the chancellor, and congregation of ma-
 sters of the university^p. Some degree of
 artifice and management might perhaps have
 been employed in procuring the testimonial;
 though this supposition seems by no means
 necessary, considering the bias under which
 Oxford is acknowledged to have laboured at
 that time. Its genuineness, at least, cannot,
 as it should seem, be disputed, since the uni-
 versity, in its letter to the council of Con-

ⁿ Chap. XLVI, Vol. III, p. 824. ^o Wood, A. D. 1411.

^p Wood, ad ann.

stance, produced there for the purpose of exculpating its members from the discredit attendant upon such a document, do not pretend to disclaim it^a. Dr. Gascoigne however, who was anxious to wash out every stain of heresy from his *alma mater*, does not hesitate at this; and, in the work in which he has given the above tale of John of Gaunt, speaking of this transaction, says, “Peter Payne, an heretic, stole the common seal of the university, under which he wrote to the heretics at Prague in Bohemia, that Oxford and all England were of the same belief with those of Prague, except the false friars mendicant^r.” This story of the forgery of Wicliffe’s testimonial, being once confidently affirmed, has, agreeably to the mode in which history is usually written, been repeated by almost every grave historian from Dr. Gascoigne to the present times.

CHAP.
LIII.

1399.

^a L’Enfant, Histoire du Concile de Constance, Liv. III, Chap. xi.

^r Dictionarium Theologicum; apud Wood, A. D. 1406, note d.

CHAP.
LIII.

1399. John of Gaunt was scarcely less obnoxious to the suppressors of heretical pravity than Wicliffe himself. It is well known that the circumstances attending the last moments of heretics and infidels have ever formed a favourite topic to their more fortunate and immaculate opposers. Precisely in this spirit, Walsingham has affirmed Wicliffe to have been struck by the judgment of God with the palsy of which he died, "on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas of Becket, just as he was about to utter from his pulpit the blasphemies which he had prepared against that holy confessor^s." Antony Wood, himself no friend to innovation, understood in this sense the anecdote of Dr. Gascoigne. "Those," says he, "who are ever prompt to represent God and his providence as dogging the heels of their antipathies, contend that the death of Wicliffe was a judgment from God. The same persons further affirm John of Gaunt duke of Lancaster,

^s A. D. 1385.

because he was a patron of Wicliffe, *pudendis suis miserum in modum ulceribus exesis occubuisse*, and add that, being devoted to lewd women, he contracted a venereal contagion. Whether these things are true, or feigned for the gratification of hatred, I shall not dispute. Certainly most authors assert that this disease was first known in the world long after this period; and it was held, even in the reign of Henry VIII, so infectious, as for it to have made one of the articles of treasonable accusation against cardinal Wolsey, that he approached the royal person at a time when he knew himself to be afflicted with this disorder^t.”

Dr. Gascoigne's tale has certainly every inherent token of a premeditated calumny. His “honest bachelor of divinity” is introduced in a manner, in which no witness was ever brought to an honest tale. If the circumstances he relates had made a subject of conversation between Richard II. and his

^t Wood, A. D. 1484.

CHAP.
LIII.

1399.

John of
Gaunt not
a man of
debauched
manners.

dying uncle, this chancellor of the university might have found witnesses of a very different fashion to attest his narrative. The story is full of hesitation and secret shame in the writer. The better to maintain it, he adds that the duke was "known throughout all England for a great fornicator;" thus making common repute as to character, the voucher for a particular fact. But Dr. Gascoigne's attestation to general character is probably as ill-founded as his fact. John of Gaunt was indeed in the theological sense a fornicator; for he was for twenty years in familiar connection with Catherine Swinford without being her husband; and this circumstance with some degree of reason gave scandal to the professional guardians of the public morals. But the fact itself of his long and constant attachment to this lady, upon which the scandal is apparently built, affords some degree of presumption that he was not the debauched and general libertine which Dr. Gascoigne would have us believe him.

His cha-
racter.

It is reasonable therefore that we should dismiss the duke of Aquitaine in this history,

with the character of a brave, generous and accomplished prince ; too quick perhaps in his displeasure, and haughty in his resentments ; but uniformly mild with the mild ; discriminating in his friendships, constant in his attachments, fraught with the social spirit and with humanity, ever loyal to his prince, passionate for the glory, the liberties and the literature of his country, of a large and liberal mind, a man whose affection to Chaucer does equal honour to both parties ; and in a word, as he has been held by the multitude of his countrymen from the fourteenth century to the present hour, one of the most honourable specimens of the character of an old English baron, which the history of this island is able to exhibit.

There seemed a sort of fatality in the measures employed by Richard II. at this period of his reign. Bolingbroke, before he set out on his exile, had obtained from Richard letters patent, authorising him to take possession of his paternal inheritance by deputy, in case the duke of Aquitaine died in his absence ^v.

His estates
confiscated
to the
crown.

^v Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra.

CHAP.
LIII.

1399.

Richard II.
goes into
Ireland.
May.

John of Gaunt however had no sooner expired, than Richard, abetted by his committee of parliament, revoked these letters ; thus at a single stroke depriving Bolingbroke of this immense succession^u. He further proceeded to the violent measure of arraigning Henry Bowet, afterward archbishop of York, his own chaplain, on the charge of having been “ of counsel in the device made to Bolingbroke in these letters ;” and he was adjudged to die ; but his sentence, in consideration of his profession, was afterward commuted into that of banishment^u. About the same time, Roger Mortimer earl of March, who had been recognised by parliament as heir to the crown, and who had for several years presided over the government of Ireland, was killed in a skirmish with the barbarous natives of that country^x. Richard, irritated at the intelligence, and prompted by love for his deceased kinsman, resolved upon an expedition against his destroyers^x, and, eager for

^u Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra.

^x Walsingham, ad ann.

the accomplishment of this new object, entirely overlooked the perilous state of affairs at home. The measures also which he adopted for the purpose of equipping his expedition, were singularly impolitic, vexatious and oppressive.

CHAP.
LIII.

1399.

Henry of Bolingbroke was restrained by no such considerations as had governed the public life of his father. No sooner had John of Gaunt sailed upon his expedition to Spain in 1386, than Bolingbroke, taking advantage of his absence, had joined in the machinations of Thomas of Woodstock; and he had been one of the five lords-appellants who soon after brought sir Simon Burley and the other favourites of Richard to the scaffold^y. He might therefore, as reasonably as that prince, or as the earls of Arundel and Warwick, have been brought to account for his conduct on that occasion, had not his father stood between him and the royal vengeance, and procured him impunity. He

Character
and dis-
positions
of Henry
of Boling-
broke.

^y Cotton, 11 Ric. 2.

CHAP. had, then, reason to believe that he should
 LIII.
 1399. never be entirely safe under the reign of Richard. He entered willingly into the opinion that all things are lawful when a crown is the end in view; and he felt none of those scruples of the chivalrous character, which represented loyalty as one of the principal constituents of a truly honourable disposition. He saw with delight that Richard with the flower of the military forces of England was removed to a distance, that his government was every where both hated and despised, and that Mortimer, the next heir to the crown, being dead, had left only an infant family to inherit his claim². He believed that he should be for ever worthy of contempt as a politician, if he did not eagerly set himself to improve a situation in which so many circumstances cooperated for his success.

Lands in
 England.
 July 4.

Bolingbroke proceeded by gentle and plausible steps to the attainment of the great

² Edmund, the eldest son, was eight years of age. Dugdale, Baronage, Vol. I, art. Mortimer.

object he had in view. He landed in England with a very small number of followers ^a. CHAP.
LIII.
 Being come, he protested that he did not entertain a thought injurious to the established government, and had no design in his expedition but to claim in person, since he was not permitted to do so by his representative, the extensive domains of his deceased father. 1399.
His ap-
parent mo-
deration.
 Many of the English nobility resorted to him in support of this his equitable pretension, immediately on his arrival. It was the general sentiment that he had been most unjustly treated; and no one was willing to resist him. He observed the state of things; he calculated his measures with consummate craft and duplicity. He proceeded in a short time further, to undertake to reform the administration of government, and to remove the evil ministers who had advised Richard to the murder of his uncle, and to the other violent measures which had lately been pursued. The whole kingdom seemed, as it were by His success.

^a Walsingham, ad ann.

- CH A P. concert, to embrace the party of the invader ;
 LIII. the duke of York, who had been left regent,
 1399. after a show of resistance joined him ; and
 Puts to death the three of the king's principal advisers were
 favour-ites of Ri- put to death by summary execution ^b. The
 chard. new state of things was wholly unexpected ;
 the revolution was sudden and complete ; and
 men had not time to reflect upon the calamities which would probably result from placing a bold and insolent usurper upon the throne.
- Richard II. Richard, immediately on receiving the news
 returns. of the invasion, returned to defend his birth-
 August. right, was deserted by his followers, and
 Is taken prisoner. taken prisoner ^b ; and, in less than three
 Deposed. months from the landing of Henry, this
 daring invader was proclaimed king, and entered into undisputed possession of the functions of royalty.
- Behaviour of Chaucer on that event. It is necessary that we should recollect these particulars, that we may estimate properly the conduct of the father of English poetry in this last period of his life. The

^b Walsingham, ad ann.

behaviour of Gower, his brother-poet, on this revolution has already been related°. He was one of the first to congratulate the new king upon his unexpected and ill-gotten dignity; and he thought he could never sufficiently exercise his talent in encomiums upon this great event. Nor can we severely condemn his feelings or his conduct; he experienced an awful joy at seeing the murder of his great protector and patron so soon and signally avenged. But his feelings were those of a man and a friend, not of one deeply interested in and profoundly attentive to the welfare of the community.

Chaucer preserved the most inviolable silence. Not one line has he dedicated to this revolution; not in one passage of his works is there any mention of Henry of Bolingbroke. He was a younger man than Gower; and we may infer, from the number of documents which relate to him in the short remainder of his life, that he was in

CHAP.
LIII.

1399.
Contrasted
with that
of Gower.

° Vol. II, Chap. XVII,

CHAP. reasonable health, and in full possession of
LIII. his faculties.

1399.

Chaucer had many motives that Gower had not, to pay his devotions to the new lord of the ascendant. Henry IV. was the son of the man to whom he had been unreservedly attached through life, and who had never ceased to load him with benefits. He had therefore a sort of hereditary claim upon him. We may believe, from the multitude of verses in which Gower has celebrated the usurper, that Henry was ambitious of the suffrage of the muses ; and indeed it was in the character of so artful a statesman, to desire this in addition to the other means of supporting his throne. The Beauforts, nephews to Chaucer's wife, were particularly distinguished by Henry IV. who was their brother by the father's side : the earl of Somerset was appointed by him in the first year of his reign chamberlain of England^d ; and in the sequel Thomas, afterward duke of Exeter, lord high admiral

^d Sandford, Book IV, Chap. VIII.

and lord chancellor^e; while Henry bishop of Lincoln, was successively nominated to the see of Winchester, and obtained the hat of a cardinal^e. Nor was the king inattentive to the poet or his family. Chaucer had not only his former grants confirmed to him, but also received an additional grant of forty marks *per annum*; and Thomas, his son, obtained from the bounty of the sovereign a variety of other distinctions, beside being appointed to the office of chief butler, and elected, as it should seem through the influence of the crown, speaker of the house of commons.

These things considered, the contrast between the behaviour of Chaucer and Gower on this memorable occasion cannot fail to appear striking. Chaucer, we have a right to believe, as a patriot, anticipated the consequences of the usurpation with terror. He felt that it would be unworthy the respect he entertained for the memory of John of Gaunt, one of whose most cherished principles was

CHAP.
LIII.

1399.

^e Sandford, Book IV, Chap. I.

CH A P.
LIII.

1399.

loyalty, and who, he was sure, would, if yet living, have been among the bitterest censurers of the conduct of his son, to join the crowd of adulators drawn together by the attraction of a splendid crime. He disdained to prostitute himself to the applause of a bold and dazzling act, pregnant with the direst calamities to his country. As a poet, he felt too deeply the sacredness of the muse, to be able to lend his talents to the temporising politics of the day, or to employ his pen, for any motives of private interest or affection, in blazoning the cause of guilt. As an old man on the brink of the grave, his feelings were too serious, to allow him, as the last act of his life, to praise that by which he might be benefited, but which was unworthy of praise, and which all posterity would condemn.

Stanzas, en-
titled
Chaucer to
his Emptie
Purse.

One exception to this statement occurs, if our poet be really the author of the Envoy to a well-humoured and pleasant little copy of verses, entitled Chaucer to his Emptie Purse. These stanzas have the appearance of referring to the last period of the poet's life, when he came to London, as it has been said,

for the purpose of soliciting his affairs at court, somewhat deranged by the late revolution. CHAP.
LIII.

1399. Henry IV. annulled the proceedings of that assembly of the legislature which had been convoked on occasion of Woodstock's conspiracy^f; and it has therefore been supposed that all the grants and acts of authority of the two last years of Richard were treated by his successor as void. This circumstance has been understood as affecting the resources of Chaucer, and obliging him to repair to the metropolis to petition the renewal of his grants. The stanzas, named, Chaucer to his Emptie Purse, are in agreement with this representation. In the course of them, the poet gaily intreats of his purse, if she "wol not be his tresoure," and supply him to the extent of his wish, that at least she will not wholly desert him :

Out of this towné helpe me by your might !
and a little further on,

^f Cotton, 1 Hen. 4.

CHAP.
LIII.

For I am shave as nighe as any ^z frere.

1399.

The Envoy, which is comprised in five lines, commences,

O conquerour of ^h Brutés Albion,
Which that, by lyne, and fre eleccion,
Ben very kinge.

This couplet may without hesitation be referred to Henry IV, as it insists upon nearly the same grounds of claim to the crown, as Henry himself alluded to when in open parliament he challenged the succession ⁱ.

Their character,

It would be by no means extraordinary, if Chaucer, in writing this couplet, should have satisfied himself with the thought that there was a wide difference, as indeed there is, between an incidental epilogue to a courtly copy of verses in which the poet is soliciting his affairs, and such elaborate and fulsome panegyrics as Gower addressed to the new

^z friar.

^h Brute, the first conqueror of England according to the fabulous history of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

ⁱ Cotton, 1 Hen. 4. Parl. History, ad ann.

sovereign; and should have allowed himself
 in the one, while he conscientiously abstained
 from the other.

CHAP.
LIII.

1399.

We must however by no means hastily conclude that this compliment to the usurper, slight as it is, was penned by Chaucer. Every lover of poetry in England, for two centuries after Chaucer's death, made the writings of this poet his principal study: many who incidentally courted the muse, were willing to shoot in his Ulysses's bow, and were gratified, if, in the dust and confusion of manuscripts, a few lines of theirs might pass upon the world for his. This is the true source of the several surreptitious narratives which have been intruded into the Canterbury Tales, and which Mr. Tyrwhit has so judiciously weeded out. It would be nothing wonderful then, if, in the midst of "the heap of rubbish^k," which Stow and others admitted into their editions, the Envoy in question, or even the

Not a genuine production of Chaucer.

^k Tyrwhit, Account of the Works of Chaucer, prefixed to his Glossary.

CHAP. whole of the stanzas, entitled Chaucer to his
 LIII.
 Emptie Purse, should have been falsely attributed to our author.

Contradicted by his real history.

An argument that this is really the case arises from the consideration, that they do not well accord with what, from other sources, we know of Chaucer's situation at this time. It has been proved by a crowd of witnesses that in the latter part of his life he tenanted Donnington-Castle; and it has been shown to be extremely probable, that this mansion was given him by John of Gaunt, to raise him from the plebeian rank to which he had hitherto belonged. It is not likely that the uncle-in-law of cardinal Beaufort and his brothers; the father of him who in the second year of Henry IV. was speaker of the house of commons; and a man who was in some sense kinsman to the king; should have been in the forlorn circumstances described in these stanzas, "shave as nighe as any frere," and unable to remove himself from London to his provincial home. It has been said by some biographers, that, "all the publick acts of the deposed king Richard in

the twenty-first year of his reign being declared void, Chaucer was forced to quit his retirement, to come up to town to solicit his causes¹." But this has probably been affirmed by inference from the stanzas in question, and is contradicted by the records; from which it appears that the ground of his soliciting the renewal of his patents was not any supposed want of validity in the grants of Richard, but that Chaucer had by some accident lost or mislaid them; and they were immediately renewed on its appearing from the copies in the rolls, that such grants had been made to him by the late sovereign^m.

We know however that Chaucer came to London, in the last year of his life, and that he died there; though we do not know the cause of this removal. Leland says that, "toward the close of his life, when his hairs were grey, and the infirmities of age pressed heavily upon him, he found himself obliged

CHAP.
LIII.

1399.

Chaucer re-
moves to
London.

¹ Biographia Britannica, art. Chaucer.

^m Appendix, No. XXVII.

CHAP. to come to London for the arrangement of
 LIII.

1399.

his affairs, and there died " : " and, though the work of Leland, containing this information, is not distinguished for accuracy, its statement in this point is partly confirmed to us by an independent and unquestionable document.

Rents a
house near
Westmin-
ster Ab-
bey.

There is preserved, among the records in the office of the dean and chapter of Westminster, a lease, made to Chaucer by Robert Hermodsworth, keeper of the chapel of St. Mary at Westminster, in the name of the abbot, prior and convent of Westminster, of a tenement situate in the garden of this chapel; for the term of fifty-three years, but determinable by the death of Chaucer; at the yearly rent of fifty-three shillings and four pence °. The date of this lease however, the twenty-fourth of December, does not accord with the supposition, that the object of Chaucer in his journey to London was to solicit the renewal of his grants. That object was obtained by him on the eighteenth

His pen-
sions re-
newed.

^a Scriptores Britannici, cap. dv. ° Appendix, No. XXVIII.

of October, eighteen days after the accession of the new sovereign ^p; and a further pension of forty marks *per annum* was settled upon him five days earlier ^q. It is clear therefore that the question of these grants was attended with no difficulty; and it is reasonable to believe that the favour which Chaucer obtained, sprung from the spontaneous friendship and kindness of Henry IV.

C H A P.
LIII.

1399.

A further
pension
conferred
upon him.

Why Chaucer, who was more than seventy years of age, should hire a house for fifty-three years, seems difficult to discover. The reason of his removing to London probably was, that, in the present perilous state of revolution, he deemed a country-residence scarcely safe, and judged that the proper retreat for one resolved to take no part in political affairs, was the metropolis.

The short remainder of the life of Chaucer was not undistinguished by memorable public events. A conspiracy was formed toward the close of the year for the assassination of the

1400.

Plot for the
assassin-
ation of
Henry IV.

^p Appendix, No. XXVII.

^q Appendix, No. XXVI.

C H A P.
LIII.
1400. usurper ; and, what is sufficiently remarkable, the consultations for this purpose are said by some of our old chroniclers ^r to have been held in the house of the abbot of Westminster, nearly adjoining to that which had lately been leased to Chaucer. This story however, so far as relates to the abbot of Westminster, has been completely refuted ^s. The principals in the plot were ^t the earl of Huntingdon half-brother to the deposed king, the earl of Rutland eldest son of Edmund of Langley duke of York, and other companions of the riotous and dissolute hours of the unfortunate monarch ; who, having been treated with considerable rigour by the first parliament of Henry IV, were at the same time left at large to pursue their revenge. The administration however of Richard II. had become so hateful to the

^r Hall and Hollinshed. The story has been repeated by Sandford, Kennet, Rapin and Henry.

^s Widmore, History of Westminster Abbey, ad ann.

^t Walsingham, ad ann.

common people, that, when the conspiracy was detected, and some of the principal of those engaged in it had taken refuge in the castle of Cirencester, they were beset by the populace, and, having fired the town in their own defence, were dragged into the market-place, and there beheaded". Near forty persons of distinction were thus executed, by orders from Henry IV, or otherwise^w; one of whom, the earl of Huntingdon, had for his consort a daughter of the deceased John of Gaunt, and sister to the present king. The earl of Rutland had previously made his peace by betraying his associates.

C H A P.
LIII.

1400.

Executions.

The event of this conspiracy was not less fatal to the unhappy Richard; who survived the destruction of his kindred and partisans only by a few weeks, having perished with

Death of Richard II.
Feb. 14.

^w Walsingham, ad ann.

^w Hall, Hollinshed, &c. Walsingham, who does not specify any number, says, *quamplures hujus conspirationis conscii morte mulctati sunt*; and again, *plures acceperunt similem mortis sortem*.

CHAP.
LIII.

1400.

hunger in the castle of Pomfret, where he was confined, and in which, sixteen years before, John of Gaunt had been obliged to take refuge from the snares which Richard spread for his life. Either the suspicious and unrelenting usurper, irritated by the conspiracy, issued orders for the destruction of his rival by these cruel means: or, which is the report of the contemporary historians, and is sufficiently coincident with what we know of the disposition of the misguided prince, hearing of this general massacre of his friends, he refused all nourishment, and voluntarily followed them to the tomb^x.

The body of Richard was brought to London, the face being uncovered and exposed to view in every town on the road, and in St. Paul's cathedral, that his death might be universally known, and that it might be believed that no violence had been practised against him^x.

^x Walsingham and Otterbourne, ad ann. The first author, who mentions the tale of his being murdered by eight assas-

sins, is Fabian. He however coolly affirms of this story, that it is what "of moste wryters is testyfyed and alleged." Scrope, archbishop of York, who was beheaded for high treason in 1405, asserts, in the manifesto in which he announced his rebellion, that Richard perished in consequence of being denied all sustenance, having first endured the miseries of hunger and thirst for fifteen days and nights. (*Anglia Sacra*, Pars II, art. 18.) The testimony of this distinguished personage however is somewhat allayed, not only by the consideration of the nature of such a manifesto, in which the opposite party is of course to be loaded with every crime, but also by the phrase with which his assertion is qualified, "*ubi in fame, siti ac frigore, UT VULGARITER DICITUR, cum crucifixerunt, interemerunt et occiderunt.*" — This Scrope, brother to the earl of Wiltshire one of the favourites of the unhappy Richard, and descended from the Scropes of Masham, was of a very different family, as well as character, from Richard lord Scrope of Bolton, the friend of Chaucer.

C H A P.
LIII.

1400.

CHAP. LIV.

DEATH OF CHAUCER.

CHAP.
LIV.

1400.

CHAUCER died on the twenty-fifth of October of the present year, in London, and no doubt in the house he had hired from the abbot of Westminster, the situation of which is said to have been nearly on the same spot where Henry VII's. chapel now stands^a.

Verses supposed to have been written by Chaucer on his death-bed.

There is a copy of verses, which appears to be genuine, and which is contained in all the editions, entitled, Gode Counsaile of Chaucer; that is said to have been "made

^a Widmore, History of Westminster Abbey, ad ann. 1502, 3.

by him upon his dethe bedde lying in his grete anguysses^b." The notion that it was so composed is somewhat corroborated by the phraseology of the fourth line from the end, which has no strict connection with the preceding part of the composition. Mr. Tyrwhit justly observes, that, "of such a circumstance, some further proof should be required," than merely the rubric, prefixed perhaps in a single manuscript^c. The circumstance however may be real: the statement may have been founded upon constant tradition or unequivocal authority. The idea of verses so composed will always be interesting, and the vein of the stanzas in question is calculated to increase this interest. They are expressive of that serene frame of temper,

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LIV.

1400.

^b Speght, *Life of Chaucer*: his books. A manuscript in the Cotton Library (Otho, A. 18: see the *Life of Chaucer* in Urry, and Tyrwhit, *Account of Chaucer's Works* prefixed to Glossary) exhibiting the above title, or rubric, has since been lost or destroyed.

^c ubi supra.

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LIV.

1400.

that pure and celestial equanimity, which so eminently characterised the genius of Chaucer and of Shakespear. I shall therefore insert them in this place.

FLIE fro the ^dprese, and dwell with ^esoth-
fastnesse ;

^fSuffise unto thy gode, though it be small ;

For ^ghorde hath hate, and climbyng ^htikel-
nesse,

ⁱPrece hath envie, and ^kwele is blent oer
all ;

^lSavour no more then the behoven shall ;

^mRede well thy selfe, that other folk canst
rede ;

And ⁿtrouthe the shall deliver, 'tis no
drede.

^d press, multitude crowding in the pursuit of advancement.

^e sincerity.

^f Live according to thy means.

^g hoarding.

^h uncertainty.

ⁱ Ambition.

^k opulence is every where a prey to censure.

^l Indulge thy appetite no more.

^m Judge.

ⁿ sincerity, out of doubt, shall be thy deliverance.

Painé the not eche croked to redresse,
 • In trust of her that tourneth as a balle :
 Grete ^p rest standeth in litel businesse :
 Beware also to spurné again a ^q nalle ;
 Strive not as doth a ^r crocké with a walle ;
 * Demeth thy self, that demest others dede ;
 And trouthe the shall deliver, 'tis no drede.

That the is sent receve ^t in buxomnesse ;
 The wrastlyng of this worlde asketh a fall ;
 Here is no home ; here is but wildernesse :
 Forthe, pilgrim, forthe, o ^u best out of thy
 stall !

Loke up on high, and thanke thy God of all ;
 x Weiveth thy luste, and let thy ghoste the
 lede ;
 And trouthe the shall deliver, 'tis no drede.

Thus then we may have the pleasure of
 believing, what is sufficiently probable from
 other circumstances, that Chaucer died, at

° In confidence of Fortune. ^p tranquillity.

^q nail. ^r cup, a piece of pottery.

* Judge. ^t with submission, with content. ^u beast.

x Suppress thy carnal passions, and obey the promptings of
 thy spirit.

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LIV.

1400.

the venerable age of seventy-two, in the same happy frame of mind in which he had lived, cheerful, composed and serene, at peace with the world, and philanthropically disposed with his dying breath to speak counsels of prudence and contentment to those who survived. Upon his death-bed he was probably attended, if by no other relative, at least by his eldest son, who, if we may judge from the career he afterward ran and the honourable place he filled in society, was nearly every thing that the fondest father could have wished.

Thomas
Chaucer
proved to
have been
his son.

Nothing was ever more idle than the doubt which has been started, whether Thomas Chaucer were really the son of the poet. The fact is attended with a degree of evidence rarely to be expected in a case of this sort, when it has not been absolutely ascertained by direct proofs and legal documents in the first instance. The person who drew the pedigree exhibited by Speght, and who has thus vouched with his name for the exactness of the descent, Robert Glover, is proverbially, among men officially concerned

with questions of this nature, the highest authority which England ever produced. He died in the year 1588, after having twenty years occupied a situation in the College of Heralds; and the collections he left behind him are so numerous and elaborate, that whatever is most valuable in Camden is held by the best judges to have been derived from his labours and researches ^v.

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1400.

But there are many other arguments, confirming to us the pedigree by Glover. Among the arms engraved upon the tombs of Thomas Chaucer and his daughter the duchess of Suffolk in the parish church of Ewelme in the county of Oxford, the spinning wheel, the emblem of the family name of the poet's wife, Rouet, is one of those which most frequently occurs; and the whole church is paved with carved bricks among which the

^v For this opinion I am enabled to quote the authority of Francis Townsend, esquire, Windsor Herald, mentioned in the Dissertation prefixed to Vol. I.

CHAP. same figure is repeatedly exhibited. The
LIV.

1400.

estates descended in the same manner as the arms, and we find Thomas Chaucer, and the De la Poles dukes of Suffolk, acknowledged as the undoubted proprietors of Donnington-Castle.

The ages of Geoffrey and of Thomas Chaucer are exactly such as the relative situation of father and son would seem to require.

Lastly, my researches among the records have enabled me to discover, that Thomas Chaucer was indebted for his advancement in life to the same patronage, which had constantly been extended to the poet. It appears from the patent rolls of Henry IV. already quoted, that Thomas Chaucer held certain offices in the establishment of John of Gaunt. And it is notorious that he derived his great appointments of chief butler to the king, and speaker of the house of commons, from the favour of the monarchs of the house of Lancaster.

It is proper to mention that, from Thomas

Chaucer, in the third degree was descended CHAP.
LIV.
 John De la Pole earl of Lincoln, who in right 1400.
 of his mother Elizabeth, sister to Edward IV.
 and Richard III, was selected by the latter as
 presumptive heir of the throne of England^z.
 The tomb of Alice duchess of Suffolk, the Antiquities
of Ewelme.
 daughter of Thomas Chaucer, is one of the
 most splendid, and in the finest preservation,
 belonging to so remote a period, in the king-
 dom. The less ostentatious monument of
 her father is at a little distance below. A
 small part of the offices belonging to her
 mansion here, and nine square fish-ponds
 which were constructed as the ornament of
 her garden, are still in existence. There is also
 a God's House adjoining to the church, built
 by the duchess and her consort, the establish-
 ment of which retains its original character.
 The village of Ewelme is singularly beautiful,
 sequestered and rural. The princely magni-
 ficence of the De la Poles is gone ; and no-

^z Hollinshed, A. D. 1484.

CHAP. thing remains behind but some slight ma-
 LIV.
 1400. materials to exercise the curiosity of the anti-
 quarian, or the fancy of the visionary.

As we meet with no mention of Lewis, the poet's younger son, after the year 1391, it is impossible for us to ascertain whether he survived his father, or died in his nonage.

Chaucer a
 widower.

Chaucer appears to have been a widower at the time of his death. This is clearly implied in the copy of verses beginning "My master Bukton," which has been absurdly printed in all the editions as an Envoy to the Boke of the Duchesse^a. In it he refers to the Tale, or the Prologue, of the Wif of Bathe, or to both; it must therefore have been written toward the end of his life. The lines from which we derive our information are these.

^a This mistake is detected by Mr. Tyrwhit, who has supplied the proper name of the person to whom the verses are addressed, from a manuscript in the Bodleian Collection, Fairfax, 16. See Account of Chaucer's Works, prefixed to Glossary.

And therefore, though I ^b hight for to ex- C H A P.
LIV.
 presse

1400.

The sorowe' and woe that is in mariage,
 I dare not write of it no wickednesse,
 Lest I my self fall ^c eft in soche dotage.

Chaucer cannot be understood to declare, either in jest or earnest, his fears that he might hereafter fall into the snares of marriage, if his wife were living at the time he wrote.—It would be unjust however, from his playfully expressing an aversion to marriage in the character of a satirist, to infer that he had not lived in perfect harmony and happiness with the mother of his children.

The remains of Chaucer were interred in His inter-
ment.
 Westminster Abbey. This venerable edifice had already for centuries been the burial-place of our kings; and it is probable that at least the most usual motive for admitting the bones of any person deceased into this repository of monarchs, was the honour with

^b am called. Tyrwhit, in voc.

^c afterward.

CHAP.
LIV.

1400.

which he was contemplated by survivors. A distinction of this sort was perhaps held more sacred in these days of chivalry, than in the more equal times in which we live, when talents and virtues are recognised to be the true nobility. The tomb of Chaucer, in the estimate of the present age, reflects the highest honour upon the roof under which it is placed ; but even among barbarians the title of a man to this mausoleum would have been acknowledged, who was in some sort a kinsman to the throne. It is likely that Thomas Chaucer stood by, and saw the remains of his father quietly deposited in the grave. It is likely that his funeral was attended by his nephew, Beaufort bishop of Lincoln, and the brother of the bishop, the lord great chamberlain of England. If these circumstances add nothing to the genuine honours of Chaucer, and if we confess the name of the poet to be greater than all the denominations which monarchs can bestow, yet the most fastidious philosopher may be gratified to see things as they actually were, and to be an attendant in imagination upon the herse of Chaucer.

CHAP. LV.

CHARACTER OF CHAUCER.

HAVING accompanied Chaucer through CHAP. LV.
 his public and poetical life, as far as our documents will enable us, from the cradle to the tomb, it may be gratifying to take one connected and concluding view of his manners and habits, to survey the features of his mind, and the principal traits of his character.

We know little of his early youth, except Review of his history.
 that he was born and brought up in the city His birth.
 of London ; and we seem to have sufficient indications that he was not exposed to the inconveniences of a narrow fortune, and that he received all the intellectual discipline and instruction which the metropolis of England

CHAP. LV. could then afford. If he discovered in his boyish years any of those original powers which have recommended him to our present attention, if his progress in learning was rapid, or if any interesting anecdotes of enterprise, good-nature or fortitude were repeated of him by his contemporaries, these circumstances, as might be expected, are lost to us for ever through the obscurity of the long interval of time which has succeeded.

His scho-
lastic edu-
cation.

At college, during the period of his studies at Cambridge, at Oxford, and perhaps at Paris, he was indefatigable in his exertions to attain a knowledge of what man and mind had been in the ages that were elapsed. It perhaps never happened that a man was so devoted to books as Chaucer represents himself to have been at successive periods of his life, without feeling a very early vocation to the pursuit of letters. Ancient history was at this time an unsubstantial and fleeting shade. The writings of the Greeks were inaccessible to Chaucer. But he studied Latin, French and Italian. Virgil was particularly his favourite. The adventures of romance,

Age of
Chaucer.

and the songs of the minstrels, were listened CHAP. LV.
to by him with avidity. Tales of chivalry,
of generous enterprise and heroic adventure,
had a double interest with him, because he
knew that, when he went forth into the
world, the men of whom he read, a race that
is now extinct, would be the objects of his
daily observation and intercourse. The whole
world was then romantic, scenic and sublime.
The castle of the ancient baron, the mag-
nificence of ecclesiastical edifices, the splen-
dour of the tournament, the solemnity of
religious worship yet unstripped of any of
its decorations, the troops of monks and friars
devoted to the things of an invisible world,
these were the objects which met the eye on
every side. The mind of man was not yet
broken down into a dull uniformity. This
was the age of reformers and of robbers,
Pilgrimages and crusades invited the consent
of the pious. Chaucer too had a particular
turn for subjects of humour. And those ad-
ventures which have since received their last
touches from the hands of Boccaccio, Ariosto,

CHAP. LV. La Fontaine and Voltaire, were not feebly shadowed forth in the tales of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

His friends. It was at college that Chaucer contracted a friendship with Gower and Strode, two young Oxonians of great learning and talents; a friendship which probably lasted for the greater part of their lives.

His professional pursuits. Chaucer was both a lawyer and a soldier; but he quitted each of these professions after a very short trial, and having collected from the experiment a more exact knowledge of human nature as it is modified by them, than he could have gained merely as a spectator.

His connections at court. Chaucer was a courtier; but he was a courtier in the best sense of the word, not bowing at levees, not depending upon the smiles and promises of ministers, but associating with their masters, and being the confident of the loves of the generous, and at least as yet uncorrupted, because as yet youthful, offspring of those masters. He probably had a large share in forming the

mind of the patron of Wicliffe ; the saviour CHAP. LV.
 of the bishop of Limoges, of Hereford, and
 of Swinderby ; the generous, gallant, manly
 and frank John of Gaunt duke of Lancaster.
 He was the earnest vindicator of his cal-
 umniated reputation. He is said to have
 been employed by Blanche, the heiress of
 Lancaster and youthful consort of John of
 Gaunt, to write the godly verses which she
 chanted as she dropped her beads.

Chaucer received in early life the gift of a His house at
Wood-
stock.
 house almost contiguous to the royal palace
 at Woodstock. This gift could have no other
 meaning than that his sovereigns were de-
 sirous frequently to enjoy his society, and be
 exhilarated with the sallies of his conversation.
 He observed intimately the heroic Philippa ;
 the venerable mother of the Black Prince, of
 Lionel of Antwerp, and of John of Gaunt ;
 the protectress of the distressed, and the pa-
 troness of Froissart. Edward III. and his
 eldest son, the victors of Cressy and Poitiers,
 whose glorious forms often pass in review
 before our entranced imaginations, were the
 familiar friends of Chaucer, and were equally

CHAP. LV. known to him in their proudest stretch of thought, and in their plainest and most undisguised moments.

His embassies.

Chaucer was an ambassador. He is affirmed by Froissart to have been a principal in the unsuccessful attempt to negotiate a marriage for Richard prince of Wales with a daughter of France. This situation must have afforded him an ample opportunity of observing the temper of courts, the tricks of ministers, and the prejudices and prepossessions of kings.

His public employments in England.

Chaucer was a minister. His place was that of comptroller of the customs. His office was probably by the water side, amidst all the bustle and confusion of trade. Trade was in a considerable degree the passion of his age, for at this time Venice, Genoa and London were powerful cities, made so by the operation of commerce. The comptroller of the customs was enjoined to keep the accounts of his employment with his own hand. Chaucer was seldom absent from the duties of his place, for we find a leave of absence to him for a month formally recorded upon the Patent Rolls, and only one such leave of ab-

sence has yet been observed. He tells us him- CHAP. LV.
 self that he had no opportunity for the pleasures of study, till he “had made an end of all his reckonings,” and the business of the day was concluded. This lasted twelve years.

Chaucer was a patriot. He never even in thought departed from his allegiance to the grandson of his first benefactors. But he bitterly deplored the evil habits that prince had contracted, and the pernicious counsellors into whose hands he had fallen. He saw them plotting at once the destruction of the man in the world to whom he was himself bound by the most complicated ties, and the ruin of the liberties of the metropolis of which he was a native, and which was dependent for all its distinctions upon the permanence of those liberties. He embarked his all in resistance to their machinations. His patriotic exertions.

Chaucer was an exile and a prisoner. He was fated to experience the vicissitudes of human life. He paid in this instance the debt for which we are all of us in some manner called upon, to the condition of our ter- His exile and imprisonment.

CHAP. LV. restrial existence ; and he gained that knowledge, and those wholesome impressions, which are seldom gained but through the operation of adversity. In his exile he was nearly destitute of all the comforts and conveniences of life ; and in his imprisonment he witnessed the savage triumph of the unrelenting Thomas of Woodstock, and perhaps saw from his window the victims whom that usurper was daily dragging to execution.

The terms upon which he was liberated from his confinement after five years of oppression and difficulty, are such as no admirer of Chaucer will with pleasure contemplate.

Reinstated
in office.

Upon his restoration to liberty Chaucer was appointed clerk of the works, an office on many accounts more agreeable to him than his former place of comptroller of the customs. He occupied this situation however only for a short time.

Retires to
Wood-
stock.

Being now more than sixty years of age, he retired to his favourite residence of Woodstock. He was tired of business and of courts, and wished to enjoy the pleasures of privacy and nature. He did not however

retire to a life of indolence. As he had begun CHAP. LV.
his literary career early, so he finished it late.

In a green and vigorous old age he planned and undertook the Canterbury Tales. One of the most extraordinary specimens of active genius and various talent which England has produced, thus appears to have been the fruit of a period of life, when common men think themselves excused from further exertion.

Chaucer was probably satisfied with his modest roof at Woodstock. The Canterbury Tales may be seen to have been the production of a serene, a cheerful and contented mind, buffeted by the world, but not broken, and carrying off from all its defeatures and misadventures whatever is most valuable in man. Yet he was not so contented with Woodstock, as to be incapable of being tempted to leave it. John of Gaunt at this time married Chaucer's kinswoman; and he told the poet that now, being nearly allied to royalty, he must change the style in which he had hitherto lived. Chaucer consented. An ancient castle opened its ample gates, and spread out its spacious apartments, to receive

Removes
to Don-
nington.

CHAP. LV. him as its inhabitant. Chaucer brought hither the same gay and well-tempered mind which had accompanied him through life: he sat under his own oaks, and in a truly social spirit named them after his benefactors and patrons.

Behaviour
on the ac-
cession of
Henry IV.

One event only was reserved for the concluding scene of the life of Chaucer. His sovereign was deposed, and the son of John of Gaunt usurped the throne. Chaucer's conduct on this occasion is highly worthy of our praise. He did not oppose the usurper; he did not wish to involve his country in further broils. He was too old and too retired, to be able to flatter himself that he could contribute to redress the wrongs he deplored. But all the benefits of the new sovereign, and all his old connections with and obligations to the father of that sovereign, could not extort from him a line of congratulation.

His death.

Chaucer died easily and happily as he lived; and, if the verses he is said to have written on his death-bed were actually his, they may be regarded as a very extraordinary exhibition

of a serene and collected mind in the last CHAP. LV.
 period of existence. If he were a lover of
 greatness, he might be satisfied with the high
 rank of his wife's relations, and his own
 nearness to the throne. If he felt anxious
 for the future prosperity of his offspring and
 descendants, he must have been pleased with
 the situation and prospects of his son, who
 was, in the year after his father's death, chosen
 speaker of the house of commons. The re-
 mains of Chaucer were interred in the repo-
 sitory of our kings, and the place hallowed
 by his dust has ever since been considered as
 the resting-place of poets.

The placid and gentle character of Chaucer
 is conspicuous in all his works. In this re-
 spect there is a striking resemblance between
 him and Shakespear. That genius, whose
 creative mind soared above all human com-
 petition, who could enter into all the pe-
 culiarities of man, and personate all his
 passions, was himself characterised by a tem-
 per peculiarly equable and serene. With an
 intellect incessantly active, wandering amidst
 the imaginary inhabitants of earth and sea

Placid and
 gentle
 dispo-
 sition of
 Chaucer.

CHAP LV. and air, and every day engendering new miracles to astonish mankind, he perpetually retained his true bias, and rested upon his proper centre. It is perhaps distinctive of a genius of the first order, to perform his greatest wonders without that straining, agitation and effort, that are incident to minds to which the production of any thing above the ordinary level is a matter of difficulty.

His love of
cheerful
scenery.

The customary cheerfulness and serenity of the mind of Chaucer is particularly conspicuous in his delineations of nature. They all take their hue from the mind of the beholder, and are gay, animated and fresh. He usually sets out upon his walk early in the morning, when the world has been refreshed by repose, when the grass is impearled with dew, and when the delicious scents of field and tree and flower are yet unpolluted by the beams of the flaring sun. Many instances of the beauty of Chaucer's landscapes we have already had occasion to cite. Its sweetness intrudes itself into his most sorrowful compositions. It soothes in his elegy upon the death of the princess Blanche, and it breaks

forth with peculiar lustre in his Complaint of CHAP. LV.
 the Black Knight. One exquisite example
 of this feature of the poet's mind it may be
 worth while to add from the poem of the
 Cuckow and the Nightingale, written when
 he was "old and unlusty"^a; and addressed,
 like the *Legende of Gode Women*, to Anne
 of Bohemia, who appears at this time to have
 resided at Woodstock^b. The poet is desirous
 of hearing the song of the nightingale, which
 yet he had not "herde of al that yere,"
 though it was already "the thirde of May."
 For this purpose he sets out "anon as he the
 day aspidé";

And unto a wodde that was fasté by
 I wenté forthé aloné boldély,
 And helde the way downe by a broké side ;
 Til I came to a ^c launde of white and grene,
 So faire an one had I never in bene ;
 The grounde was grene, ypoudred with daisye,
 The floures and the ^d grevés alike hie,
 Al grene and white was nothing ellés sene.
ver. 58.

^a ver. 37.^b ver. 274.^c lawn.^d groves, bushes.

CHAP. LV.

Further
proofs of
the excel-
lence of his
disposition.

The sweetness of Chaucer's character may also be inferred from his long friendship with Gower, and from the circumstance of his drawing up toward the close of his life a treatise of astronomy for the use of a boy of ten years. But a circumstance still more singular and worthy of recollection, when we are summing up his character, is that of his being eight years suitor to a lady, probably the same whom he afterward married. A number of traits of disposition may be deduced from this anecdote. It could never have belonged to a person of a fiery and hot-brained temperament; it could never have belonged to a man dissipated, fickle and inconstant. Such things have been related of persons of feeble understanding and emasculate character. But, in a man of Chaucer's force, it marks only persistive choice, a pursuit, not easily repressed, yet not breaking out into extravagances, a character undebauched and sincere, and a love deeply grounded in the most permanent qualities of the mind.

His con-
versation
in Friday
Street.

Chaucer was a man of a frank and easy temper, undeformed by haughtiness and re-

serve, and readily entering into a certain CHAP. LV.
degree of social intercourse on trivial occasions. This particular is strongly confirmed to us by the curious record of his testimony in the cause of arms between Scrope and Grosvenor. He describes himself as walking in Friday Street in the city of London, and observing there the arms which he had always seen borne by the family of Scrope, hung out as a sign. This inconsiderable circumstance immediately excites an interest in the patriarch of the English language and of English poetry. The Scropes were his friends. He accosts a stranger whom he perceives accidentally standing by, and asks, What inn is that, which I observe has hung out the arms of Scrope for its sign?—Nay, replied the other, it is no inn, nor are those the arms of Scrope; they are the shield of a Cheshire family of the name of Grosvenor.—In Chaucer, the thus addressing himself to a person unknown, is no evidence of a vulgar, indelicate and indiscriminating mind. It shows that he was a character, not fastidious enough to refuse to interest itself in trifles,

CHAP.LV. and frank, even and affable, in his intercourse with mankind.

Convivial
temper of
Chaucer.

Chaucer was a man of convivial dispositions. This has reasonably been concluded from the grant he received of a pitcher, or what we should now call four bottles of wine daily from the royal cellar. It may fairly be inferred that this wine was designed for the poet's daily consumption.

His pro-
pensity to
expence.

Chaucer was a man of expensive habits, and of no very rigid pecuniary economy and foresight. This may be concluded from his frequent embarrassments. Immediately after the loss of his place of comptroller of the customs, which he had held for twelve years, and in which he had "richesse suffisauntly to weive nede, and in delicious houres was wont to enjoy blisful stoundes," he found himself in great poverty. "His worldly godes were fulliche dispente." On his restoration to favour, he obtained the perhaps equally lucrative place of clerk of the works. He resigned this office, and retired to Woodstock; yet no sooner was he settled there, and engaged in writing his Canterbury Tales,

than it became necessary that he should solicit CHAP. LV.
 another pension. When any of his patrons,
 John of Gaunt, Anne of Bohemia, or Henry
 IV, are desirous of demonstrating their kind-
 ness to him, the first thing thought of is a
 further pecuniary provision.

But Chaucer was not less fond of study His love of
study.
 than of convivial intercourse. There is
 scarcely one of his longer poems in which
 this feature of his character is not incidentally
 mentioned. He reads in bed^e. In the Par-
 liament of Birds, he had been reading all day
 long, and it is only when the light fails him,
 that he falls asleep, and has the dream which
 he proceeds to relate. And in the House of
 Fame, the eagle tells him,

—when thy labour al done is,
 And hast made al thy reckeninges,
 In stede of reste and of newe thinges,
 Thou sittest at another boke,
 Tyl fully dased is thy loke.

Book II, ver. 144.

^e Boke of the Duchesse, ver. 47.

CHAP. LV.

His tendency to-
ward en-
thusiasm.

Chaucer was a man of an enthusiastic turn of mind. This may well be inferred from the journey he appears to have made, when already forty-six years old, and employed in affairs of state, across the peninsula of Italy, that he might have the pleasure of seeing and conversing with Petrarca.

His person.

Let us add to these features of the personal character of Chaucer, his description of his own figure at the time when he was writing the *Canterbury Tales*.

Our hoste to ^fjapen he began,—
And saied thus: What man art thou? quod
he.

Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,
For ever on the ground I see thee stare.

Approché nere, and loke up merily!—
Now ware ye, ^ssires, and let this man have
place!

He ^hin the waste is shap'n as well as I:
This were a ⁱpopet in an arme to' enbrace
For any woman smal and faire of face.

^f gibe.

^s sirs.

^h is as fat as a landlord.

ⁱ poppet, *poupée*, FR.

He semeth ^k elvish by his contenance,
 For unto no wight doth he ¹ daliance.

CHAP. LV.

ver. 13623.

With the poetical character of Chaucer we have more concern than with his personal qualities. It is because his works live, that we are curious about his dispositions and habits. If it be true, which paradoxical men have affirmed, and envious men have vouched for, that the persons who have made the greatest figure among their fellows are not the persons of greatest merit, and that many who have not unfolded their talents to the world, have been both abler and more virtuous than those we are accustomed to admire, it would yet be impossible to interest us much about such characters. Men of high qualities, but who refuse the discovery of their qualities, if such there be, must be contented to be worshipped by the whimsical

Literary
 character
 of Chau-
 cer.

^k fairy-like, humoursome, mischievous.

¹ offices of courtesy.

CHAP. LV. only, and to be regarded with indifference by the rest of their species.

His smaller
pieces.

The Canterbury Tales is the great basis of the fame of Chaucer, and indolent men have generally expressed themselves with contempt of the rest of his works as unworthy of attention. The enquiries in which we have been engaged have led us frequently to refer to his smaller pieces, nor has our love of poetry come away from the pursuit unrewarded. Many passages of exquisite thinking and fancy have been recited. He indeed who wishes to become personally acquainted with Chaucer, must of necessity have recourse to his minor pieces. The Canterbury Tales are too full of business, variety, character and action, to permit the writer in any great degree to show himself. It is in Chaucer's minor pieces that we discover his love of rural scenery, his fondness for study, the cheerfulness of his temper, his weaknesses and his strength, and the anecdotes of his life.

His Troilus
and Cre-
seide.

The Troilus and Creseide in particular, that poem of which sir Philip Sidney speaks with so much delight, though deficient in action,

cannot be too much admired for the suavity CHAP. LV.
 and gentleness of nature which it displays.
 There is nothing in it to move the rougher
 passions of our nature, no hatred, nor con-
 tempt, nor indignation, nor revenge. If its per-
 sonages are unstudied in the refinements of
 artificial and systematic virtue, even their
 vices (if such we denominate them) are loving
 and gentle and undesigning and kind. All the
 milder and more delicate feelings of the soul
 are displayed in their history, and displayed
 in a manner which none but a poet of the
 purest and sweetest dispositions, and at the
 same time of the greatest discrimination,
 could have attained.

The Canterbury Tales is certainly one of
 the most extraordinary monuments of human
 genius. The splendour of the Knightes Tale,
 and the various fancy exhibited in that of the
 Squier, have never been surpassed. The hi-
 story of Patient Grisildis is the most pathetic
 that ever was written ; and he who compares
 Chaucer's manner of relating it, with that of
 the various authors who have treated the same
 materials, must be dead to all the charac-

His Canter-
 bury Tales,
 splendid
 and full of
 imagin-
 ation.
 pathetic.

CHAP. LV. teristic beauties of this history, if he does not perceive how much Chaucer has outstripped all his competitors.

rich in the
delineation
of manners.

What infinite variety of character is presented to us in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales ! It is a copious and extensive review of the private life of the fourteenth century in England.

This has usually, and perhaps justly, been thought the most conspicuous excellence of Chaucer ; his power of humour, of delineating characters, and of giving vivacity and richness to comic incidents.

deficient in
decorum.

Unhappily the age in which he lived was deficient in that nicety of moral apprehension and taste, upon which is built the no contemptible science of elegant manners and decorum. It has been said that men must have become debauched and consummate in their vices, before they can be masters in this science. This however is not true. There are no doubt various modes of expression, which will excite a prurient sport in the minds of the dissolute, and yet will be uttered with the most unapprehensive simplicity

by the inexperienced and innocent ; discrimination respecting these can only be the result of a certain familiarity with vice. But neither will these by the virtuous mind be regarded as almost any fault, even when discovered. But the licentiousness and coarseness of the tales of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, copied by Boccaccio and Chaucer, are of a different sort ; they are absolute corruption and depravity. The progress of refinement does not merely make men fastidious in their vices ; it makes them in many respects more virtuous and innocent : it not only prompts us to conceal some vices, but also induces us peremptorily and resolutely to abjure many.

The Miller's Tale and the Reeve's Tale in Chaucer are filthy, vulgar and licentious. The Tale of the Marchant, and the Wife of Bath's Prologue, are in an eminent degree liable to the last of these accusations. Yet it has been truly observed that Chaucer never appears more natural, his style never flows more easily, and his vein is never more unaffected and copious, than on these occasions.

Peculiar
excellence
of Chaucer
in
comic
narrative.

CHAP. LV. No writer, either ancient or modern, can be cited, who excels our poet in the talent for comic narrative. The reader of the most correct taste, though offended with Chaucer for the choice of his topics, will peruse these divisions of his work again and again, for the sake of the eloquence and imagination they display. The story of the Cock and the Fox, called the Nonnes Preestes Tale, is the most admirable fable that ever was written, if the excellence of a fable consists in liveliness of painting, in the comic demureness with which human sentiments are made to fall from the lips of animals, or in the art of framing a consummate structure from the slightest materials. The Sompnoures Tale, though exceedingly offensive for the clownish joke with which it is terminated, is equal in its opening and preparatory circumstances to any satirical narrative that ever was penned. The entrance of the friar into the house of the sick man, his driving away the sleeping cat from the bench he thought proper to occupy, the manner in which he lays down his walking-stick, his scrip and his hat, and

the conversation which follows, are all in the CHAP. LV.
 most exquisite stile of comic delineation.

To understand more precisely the degree of applause which is due to Chaucer, it is proper that we should distinguish between two principal schools in the poetry of modern European nations, the romantic, and the natural. On the first revival of poetry, the minds of men perhaps universally took a bent toward the former; we had nothing but Rowlands and Arthurs, sir Guys and sir Tristrams, and Paynim and Christian knights. There was danger that nature would be altogether shut out from the courts of Apollo. The senses of barbarians are rude, and require a strong and forcible impulse to put them in motion. The first authors of the humorous and burlesque tales of modern times were perhaps sensible of this error in the romance writers, and desirous to remedy it. But they frequently fell into an opposite extreme, and that from the same cause. They deliver us indeed from the monotony produced by the perpetual rattling of armour, the formality of processions and tapestry and cloth of gold,

Principal
schools of
modern
poetry.

The ro-
mantic.

The bur-
lesque.

CHAP LV. and the eternal straining after supernatural adventures. But they lead us into squalid scenes, the coarse buffoonery of the ale-house, and the offensive manners engendered by dishonesty and intemperance. Between the one and the other of these classes of poetry, we may find things analogous to the wild and desperate toys of Salvator Rosa, and to the boors of Teniers, but nothing that should remind us of the grace of Guido, or of the soft and simple repose of Claude Lorraine.

The natural.

The Decamerone of Boccaccio seems to be the first work of modern times, which was written entirely on the principle of a style, simple, unaffected and pure. Chaucer, who wrote precisely at the same period, was the fellow-labourer of Boccaccio. He has declared open war against the romance manner in his Rime of Sire Thopas. His Canterbury Tales are written with an almost perpetual homage to nature. The Troilus and Creseide, though a tale of ancient times, treats almost solely of the simple and genuine emotions of the human heart.

The allegorical.

Many however of the works of Chaucer

must be confessed to be written in a bad CHAP. LV.
 taste, fashionable in the times in which he
 lived, but which the better judgment of later
 ages has rejected. The poem called Chaucer's
 Dreame is in the idlest and weakest style of
 Romance. Nothing can be more frivolous
 than the courtship of his male and female
 eagles in the Parliament of Birds. The idea
 of the worship of the daisy must be acknow-
 ledged to be full of affectation. A continued
 vein of allegory is always effeminate, strained
 and unnatural. This error, so far as relates
 to the Romaunt of the Rose, is only indi-
 rectly imputable to Chaucer. But, in the
 Testament of Love, and elsewhere, he has
 made it the express object of his choice.

Boccaccio and Chaucer, it might be sup-
 posed, would have succeeded in banishing
 the swelling and romantic style from the
 realms of poetry. We might have imagined
 that as knowledge and civilisation grew, the
 empire of nature would have continually
 become more firmly established. But this
 was not the case. These eminent writers rose
 too high beyond their contemporaries, and

Reflux of
 taste in
 the ages
 subse-
 quent to
 Chaucer.

CHAP. LV. reached to refinements that their successors could not understand. Pulci and Boiardo took the romantic style under their protection in the following century ; and, by the splendour of their talents, and the treasures of their fancy, bestowed upon it extensive and lasting empire. We have seen how Ronsard, Du Bellay and Du Bartas corrupted the poetical taste of France. In Italy Ariosto and Tasso adopted, and carried to perfection the style of Pulci and Boiardo. Taste and literature had made no advances in England in the fifteenth century ; and, in the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth, our countrymen resorted for models principally to Italy. The earl of Surry and his contemporaries were the introducers of the Italian school in this island. Spenser in his *Faerie Queen* combined at once all the imperfections of the allegorical and the romantic. Even the transcendent genius of Milton formed itself upon these originals ; and, however we may adore the wonders of his invention, impartial criticism must acknowledge that he studied much in the school of

the artificial, the colossal and the wild, and CHAP. LV.
 little in that of nature.

It is incumbent upon us however not to treat the romantic style with too indiscriminating a severity. The fault was in thinking this the only style worthy of an elevated genius, or in thinking it the best. It has its appropriate and genuine recommendations. It is lofty, enthusiastic, and genial and cherishing to the powers of imagination. Perhaps every man of a truly poetical mind will be the better for having passed a short period in this school. And it may further safely be affirmed, that every man of a truly poetical mind, who was reduced to make his choice between the school of coarse, burlesque and extravagant humour, such as that of Hudibras for example, and the school of extravagant heroism and chivalry, such as that of Tasso, would decide for the latter. The first chills and contracts, as it were, the vessels and alleys of the heart, and leaves us with a painful feeling of self-degradation. The second expands and elevates the soul, and fills the mind of the reader with generous pride,

Merits of
the roman-
tic style.

contrasted
with those
of the
burlesque.

CHAP. LV. complacence in the powers he feels, and a warm and virtuous ardour to employ them for the advantage of others.

The natural
style re-
stored by
Shake-
spear.

It is time that we should quit the consideration of these two less glorious spheres of human genius, and turn back to the temple of Nature, where Shakespear for ever stands forth the high priest and the sovereign. The portraits drawn by those who have studied with success in her school, are dishonoured by being called portraits; they are themselves originals above all exception or challenge. The representations drawn in the romantic or the burlesque style may be to a great degree faithful exhibitions of what has actually existed; but, if they are, at least they exhibit a nature, vitiated, distorted, and, so to express the idea, denaturalised. The artificial and preconcerted is only shown, and those fainter and evanescent touches by which every man betrays the kind to which he belongs are lost. The portraits of Shakespear, on the other hand, abound in, and may almost be said to be made up of these touches. In his characters, we see the habits and prejudices of the man;

and see, as through a transparent medium, CHAP. LV.
how every accident that befalls him acts upon his habits, his prejudices, and upon those passions which are common to us all. How precisely is this the case with Justice Shallow? How completely are the starts and sallies of Hotspur, his repetitions, the torrent of his anger, his fiery temper, and his images drawn often from the most familiar and ordinary life,—how completely are they the very man that the poet desired to present to us! Shakespear does not describe, he does seem to imagine the personages of his scene; he waves his magic wand, and the personages themselves appear, and act over again at his command the passions, the impressions, and the sorrows of their former life. The past is present before us.

What comes nearest to the preeminence of Shakespear is the Don Quixote of Cervantes, the Sir Roger de Coverley of Addison, the Lovelace of Richardson, the Parson Adams of Fielding, the Walter Shandy of Sterne, and the Hugh Strap of Smollet. Fletcher also, though perhaps his most con-

CHAP. LV. spicuous merits are of another sort, has great excellence in the animating of character, as will readily be discerned, particularly in his Wit Without Money, and his Little French Lawyer.

The successive description of the several pilgrims in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, is worthy to class with these. No writer has ever exhibited so great a variety of talent in so short a compass, as Chaucer has done in this instance.

Rank to
which
Chaucer, as
poet, be-
longs, con-
sidered.

Must be
tried by
the abso-
lute merits
of his
works.

The place which any author of works of imagination shall occupy in the scale of merit and genius, depends upon two circumstances, the merit of his poems, and the merit of the poet. The first of these is of the greatest importance. He who aspires to a permanent station upon the rolls of fame, ought to expect to be tried by a naked and absolute comparison of his productions with those of other men, without taking into the consideration the superior advantages other men may have enjoyed, of language, of fortune, of freedom, of information, of scenery to generate a poetical character, or of living models to excite

emulation, which to him may have been CHAP.LV. denied. The reader has to do, strictly speaking, with the work only, and not with the man. His enquiry is into the invention, the fancy, the sentiments and the style; and, if an author tenders to him apologies and reasons why he could not exceed a certain degree of merit in these, this may relieve such an author from the harshness of condemnation, but can never obtain for his performance the stamp of applause. It may be true that the verses of Stephen Duck the thresher, or of the blind bard of Scotland, were extraordinary under the circumstances in which they were written, but a rigorous judge, placed upon the bench of criticism, would answer, "Do not tell me whether the writer of the productions you offer could spell or could see: I am only concerned to know whether the lines themselves are sublime, or pathetic, rich in fancy, or sweet and seductive with native simplicity."

Yet, a writer may lose something of the applause which seems due to him, by the operation of extrinsic circumstances; and

nd by the
circum-
stances
under
which

CHAP. LV. therefore it appears but just that he should be permitted to gain something from the same cause. It is the first man who produces an excellent epic, ode or tragedy, that ever engrosses our principal admiration; and another who composes something only just as good, will infallibly be much less respected, commended, or read. The first is in possession of the ear and the favour of the public, and it is a most difficult task to deprive him of the honourable station he has gained.

Interest
which the
reader of
taste will
feel in
those
circum-
stances.

Nay, though it should be determined that the circumstances under which a work of genius was written could never be admitted as matter of plea in the courts of criticism, they would nevertheless be always topics of interesting research. He must be indeed a rigid and cold critic, who, from approving the productions of the muse, does not proceed to entertain some love for the author. And, from the moment when that is the case, every difficulty with which he struggled, and every obstacle which he surmounted, becomes a darling subject of contemplation to his admirer. The reader of soul proceeds, from

esteem of the work, to friendship, sympathy CHAP. LV. and correspondence with the author. If he wrote in an obscure and barbarous age, if he had none but the worst models before him to copy, if, in addition to all the other labours of the poet, he had a language to construct in which to express his conceptions, or if he were the first to invent a species of poetical composition unknown before, all these are considerations inexpressibly interesting to his admirer.

The history of the poet too, as of any other man by whom what is extraordinary has been achieved, is a valuable section in the science of human nature. That such works as the Iliad or the dramas of Shakespear have in any way been the produce of human intelligence is an important fact. But the wonder, and the degree of power displayed in any monument of literature, will often be greatly enhanced, when we come to be acquainted with the circumstances under which it was erected. I want, not only to observe the beauty and solidity of the edifice before me,

Their value
in the his-
tory of the
human
mind.

CHAP. LV. but also to understand the materials with which it is built.

These observations
applied to
Chaucer.

Let us apply these principles to the writings of Chaucer. His best works, his Canterbury Tales in particular, have an absolute merit, which stands in need of no extrinsic accident to show it to advantage, and no apology to atone for its concomitant defects. They class with whatever is best in the poetry of any country or any age. Yet when we further recollect that they were written in a remote and semi-barbarous age, that Chaucer had to a certain degree to create a language, or to restore to credit a language which had been sunk into vulgarity and contempt by being considered as a language of slaves, that history and the knowledge of past ages existed only in unconnected fragments, and that his writings, stupendous as we find them, are associated, as to the period of their production, with the first half-assured lisps of civilisation and the muse, the astonishment and awe with which we regard the great father of English poetry must be exceedingly

increased, and the lover of human nature and CHAP. LV.
of intellectual power will deem no time mis-
spent that adds to his familiar acquaintance
with the history of such a man, or with
writings so produced.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

TESTIMONY GIVEN BEFORE JOHN DE DERWENT-
WATER, ONE OF THE COMMISSIONERS FOR EX-
AMINING WITNESSES, IN THE CAUSE DEPENDING
IN THE COURT MILITARY, BETWEEN SIR RICHARD
LE SCROPE AND SIR ROBERT GROSVENOR, ON
THE TWELFTH OF OCTOBER, ANNO X RIC. II, IN
THE CHURCH OF ST. MARGARET'S WESTMIN-
STER.

INTRODUCTION, p. 1.

GEFFRAY CHAUCERE Esquier, del age de xl
ans et plus, armeez par xxvij ans, produit par
la partie de mons. Richard Lescrope, jurrez et
examinez :

Demandez, si les armeez dazure ove une bende dor apperteignent, où deyvent apperteigner, au dit mons. Richard du droit et de heritage, dist,

Que oil; qar il lez ad veu estre armeez en Fraunce devant la ville de Retters, et mons. Henry Lescrope armoz en mesmes les armeez ove un label blanc et a baner, et le dit mons. Richard armeez en les entiers armez dazure ove une bende dor, et issint il lez vist armer par tout le dit viage, tanque le dit Geffrey estoit pris :

Demandez, par qei il sciet que les ditz armeez apperteignent au dit mons. Richard, dist,

Que par oy dire des veux chivalers et esquiers, et quils ount toutdys continuez lor possession en les ditz armeez, et par tout son temps pur lour armeez reputeez com commune fame et publike vois laboure et ad labouree; et auxi il dist que quant il ad veu les ditz armes en banere, en verrures, en peyntures, en vestementz, communement appelez lez armes de Lescrope :

Demandez, sil oiast unques parler quele estoit le primer auncestre du dit mons. Richard, qi portast primerment les ditz armez, dist,

Que noun ; ne qil ne oiast unqs autre mes qils estoient venuz de veille auncestre et de dez veulx gentils hommes et occupiez lez ditz armez :

Demandez, sil oiast unqueo parler come long temps que les auncestres du dit mons. Richard ount usez les ditz armes, dist,

Que noun ; mes com il ad oy dire qil passe le memoir de home :

Demandez, sil oiast unques dascun interruption ou chalange fait par mons. Robert Grovenor, ou par cez auncestres, ou par ascun en son noun, al dit mons. Richard, ou a ascun de cez auncestres, dist,

Que noun ; mes il dist qil estoit une foitz en Friday Strete en Loundres, com il alast en la rewe il vist pendant hors un novell signe faitz dez diz armez, et demandast quele herbergerie ceo estoit qui avoit pendu hors cestez armes du Scrop, et un autr luy respondist et dit, Neuyl, seigneur, ils ne sount mys penduz hors pour lez armez de Scrope, ne depeynte la por cez armeez, mes ils sount depeynte et mys la por une chivaler del counte de Chestre, que homme appelle mons. Robert Grovenor; et ceo fuist le primer foitz que oonques il oiast

parler de mons. Robert Grovenor, ou de cez
auncestres, ou de ascun autre portant le noun
de Grovenor.

*Rotulus processus in curia militari in causa
armorum inter Ricardum Le Scrope
chevalier, et Robertum Grosvenor che-
valier. 13 Ric. 2. Inter Miscellanea
in Turri Londinensi.*

No. II, p. 283, Vol. I.

HINTS FOR A CATALOGUE OF ANCIENT PORTRAITS
IN ENGLAND.

THE representations of the features of our ancestors, the English who, whether by arts or arms, distinguished themselves in past ages, have naturally become an object of research and curiosity to their descendants. Various engravers have endeavoured to gratify this curiosity, or to improve this instinctive sentiment to their own emolument; in particular two artists of no ordinary merit, Vertue and Houbraken. The sources to which they have resorted for hints for their imitations are various; coins, seals, monuments, illuminations, and paintings upon board.

The result however has been supposed by many of the best judges to contribute more to the entertainment of our fancy, and the pleasure of luxurious idleness, than to genuine

and true delineations of men who for centuries have been consigned to the tomb. Every man of feeling and taste would be glad to be enabled to contemplate the features of Alfred, of Thomas of Becket, of Roger Bacon or of Wicliffe ; but no man of sound intellect would wish to be deceived in the attempt to gratify this desire.

Careful observers will readily confess that the portraits even of our illustrious contemporaries very imperfectly represent in many cases the persons from whom they were painted. Of the paintings of the best of our living artists, nine out of ten may be affirmed to be “ similitudes unlike.” To this purpose I may quote two sentiments which I have frequently heard from artists of considerable endowments: first, that no painter can put into the visages he draws more profoundness of thought, flexibility of fancy, or animation of soul, than exist in his own mind ; and secondly, that the portraits made by any artist, exhibit, as strikingly, and as much beyond question, certain qualities of his own mind, as of the persons they pretend to represent ; the countenances painted by a man of affected manners will look affected, by a man of a hard mind

will appear rugged and stern, of a dull character dull, and of a remiss and versatile temper remiss and versatile. If such be the case in times when the art of picture exists in considerable perfection, what can be expected from the delineations of our remoter ancestors?

This sort of scepticism deserves however to be received with some qualification. As I would not break a looking-glass, because a looking-glass always gives a subdued and watery image of the objects placed before it; so neither would I set aside or despise the art of painting on account of those imperfections from which it can never be freed. The man who can find in the portrait of sir Thomas More by Holbein, of Paul III. by Titian, or of lord Strafford by Vandyke, no food for contemplation, no instrument enabling him with a certain degree of truth and satisfaction to place before him, as the persons of his fancy, the old acquaintances of his shelves, and to read in some measure the mind of him who acted, and of him who spoke, in his representative, must be composed of singular materials.

The hints which we possess for the portraits

of the ancient English are extremely imperfect. Their coins are of the rudest and poorest structure. . Their seals often present to us a figure, with the limbs of a spider, rather than of a man ; and the seal of one king was not unfrequently employed by his successor, with scarcely any alteration, but that of the inscription. The paintings upon board, of these early centuries, are for the most part daubings, worthy of the sign-post of a village ale-house. And the illuminations in ancient manuscripts, the most finished and delicate productions of this sort we possess, can scarcely ever be supposed to be drawn from the life.

The best representations of our ancestors in these remote ages are their figures in marble, in alabaster or in stone, placed upon their tombs. At the time when, as we have seen, the art of building was so assiduously cultivated, particularly from the reign of Henry III. inclusive, the figures and countenances exhibited in monumental statuary are much better, than the contemptuous and exclusive spirit of modern times would make us willing to acknowledge. No test in this respect can be more worthy of regard, than the feeling which inevitably rises in the mind of a well

informed spectator, when he sees a figure void of insipidity, and pervaded with character, or when he confesses by an immediate sentiment, This is a real countenance, and has somewhere had an actual counterpart, never indeed seen by me, among the living individuals of the human species. Tombs have also this advantage over every other class of imitative representations, that we can in most cases trace the period at which they were erected, and are scarcely liable to be imposed on by forgeries.

The portraits of Henry III, and of Eleanor of Provence his queen, which are engraved in Mr. Gough's Sepulchral Monuments from their tombs in Westminster Abbey, are fully entitled to the praise of having been carved in a respectable style, and of bearing an internal evidence of likeness and reality. Eleanor of Provence was so handsome, that she is said to have furnished to various artists of that period a model for their Madonas. The figure of king John, which is placed upon his tomb in Worcester cathedral, is said to be entitled to the same praise. The portraits of Edward III. and his queen Philippa upon their tombs have great excellence ; and a similar judgment may

be pronounced of many which belong to this interval.

The paintings on board, of the same period are by no means entitled to equal commendation. The greatest part of them are wretched daubings; beside which, we are here, more than in any other of the classes of representation, exposed to every species of fraud and imposition. The history of a painting of this sort, whence it came, and through what hands it has passed, can scarcely ever be traced. The portraits of the ancient founders of colleges at Oxford and Cambridge are pronounced by the best judges to be forgeries, with scarcely any exception. The general tradition at Oxford, is that the pretended portraits of John Baliol and Devorgilda, his wife, founders of Baliol College in the year 1268, were taken respectively from a blacksmith of Oxford in the seventeenth century, and a miss Meeks, or Reeks, an apothecary's daughter.

Let us continue however to interest ourselves respecting the portraits of our remoter ancestors, and let us believe that we shall not be altogether deceived. In monumental sculptures, as has been already said, we are not

without a certain degree of representation upon which the most cautious and sceptical observer will find himself in the last result obliged to set some value. But, where our materials are not altogether so excellent, a curious and ardent enquirer will willingly accept such as he can obtain. It is impossible to pass from perusing an ancient poem of great merit, or an interesting piece of biography, without wishing to see the image or representation of the author in the one case, or the person concerning whom we have been interested in the other, or without rejoicing when we meet with such a representation, if it appears in any degree worthy of its subject. An illumination, a seal, or even a coin, may be presumed in many cases to preserve some degree of outline; the shape of the nose, the forehead or the mouth. It is thus that Hoccleve speaks of the illuminated portrait of Chaucer. If in some respects these ancient memorials are deficient in drawing, or fail to represent what the instructed eye recognises for real and human, it is reasonable that we should feel obliged to an ingenious artist who, like Vertue or Houbraken, may, without violating the contour and rude outline, have substituted flesh where before was iron, and breathed a soul

into the uninformed and shapeless mass. If they have made the poet look like a poet, the warrior like a warrior, and the man of profound and penetrating mind like what he was in this respect, I accept to a certain degree the exertions of their art as genuine images, without yielding them an unreserved and implicit homage, and without believing that art, when encountering a variety of obstacles, or when exerted with every advantage, is not perpetually liable to misrepresentation and delusion.

The portrait of John of Gaunt, prefixed to the second volume of this work, is taken from a painted window in the college of All Souls at Oxford. This college was founded in the year 1437, and the window in question is pronounced to be coeval with the foundation^a. From what model the portrait of John of Gaunt, who had then been dead about forty years, was taken, it is impossible for us to pro-

^a Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, Chap. II. Wood, *History of Colleges in Oxford*, by Gutch: College of All Souls,

nounce. A sepulchral figure of the duke of Lancaster and of his duchess Blanche existed in St. Paul's cathedral, previously to the great fire of London in 1666, and is engraved in Dugdale's History of that Church, published in the year 1658; but it was certainly not placed there sooner than the reign of Henry VII, as he is mentioned, by the title of the "most wise king," in the inscription which accompanies it.—The portrait in this work has been improved, I think very happily, in point of dignity and character by the artist employed upon it, from a consideration of John of Gaunt's disposition and endowments, as they are exhibited in history.

Concerning the portraits of Chaucer yet in existence it seems proper that we should be more particular. The first in point of authenticity is probably the well known illumination in Hoccleve's poem, entitled *De Regimine Principis*. Hoccleve appears to have written in the reign of Henry IV; and that he was personally acquainted with Chaucer is sufficiently clear from the stanza of his poem opposite to which this portrait is placed.

Al thogh his lyfe be ^bqueynt, the resem-
blaunce

Of him hath in me so fresh ^clyflynesse,

That to putte othre men in remembraunce

Of his persone, I have heere his lyknesse

^dDo maké, to this ende, in sothfastnesse,

That thei that have of him ^elest thought and
mynde,

By this peynturé may ageyn him fynde.

I do not know whether more than one copy of this portrait exists. It is to be found in the Harleian Collection, No. 4866. In another copy of the *De Regimine Principis* in the British Museum, referred to by Warton and Gough as containing a duplicate of this illumination (Ayscough's Catalogue, 17 D. 18), the margin opposite to the above stanza exhibits no portrait. A manuscript in the Cotton collection (Otho, A. 18) is said to have contained a similar illumination; but it is now destroyed.

The figure of Chaucer which was engraved

^b quenched, extinct.

^c liveliness.

^d Caused make.

^e lost.

on his tomb in Westminster Abbey in 1556, is affirmed to have been copied from Hoccleve's illumination^f. It is at present wholly obliterated.

There is a portrait of Chaucer on board in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. This is pronounced by the most intelligent antiquaries not to be of the times of Chaucer from this circumstance. On the picture are painted the figures 1400, being the date of the year of Chaucer's death; but the Arabic numeral answering to our 4 appears not to have received this form till a considerable time after the period at which this portrait ought to have been painted^g, if taken from the life.

It is from this painting that the head of Chaucer is engraved which is placed in the front of

^f Warton and Gough (*ubi supra*) affirm that it was copied from the manuscript (Ayscough, 17 D. 18), which contains no portrait.

^g In Gough's Sepulchral Monuments, there is a plate, exhibiting the successive forms of the numeral characters (Vol. II, Introduction, Plate 34), in which the author received assistance from several excellent antiquaries. In that plate, the modern form of the Arabic character representing the number four, is said to have been introduced in the time of Henry VIII.

this work. If I had seen earlier the illumination in the Harleian manuscript of Hoccleve, I should certainly have preferred that as a model. There is a softness and mellowness in the features of Hoccleve's portrait, very uncommon for the times when it was made, and which, with a little aid from the graver of an intelligent artist, would have conveyed a very adequate idea of a countenance worthy of a poet. The Bodleian portrait is not without character, but is less meritorious, and cannot be regarded as equally authentic.

There is a painting of Chaucer on board in the British Museum; but it does not deserve to be named. It is supposed to have been bought by sir Hans Sloane for the single purpose of serving as a point of comparison to a pebble in his collection, which has been thought to exhibit some outlines of a human head resembling that of Chaucer.

Mr. Warton informs us, that he possessed a very old picture of Chaucer, which had formerly been hung up in Chaucer's house at Woodstock, and which greatly resembled the illumination in Hoccleve^h.

^h Warton, Vol. II, Sect. II.

Colonel Matthew Smith, major of the Tower of London, is said to have in his possession an original portrait of Chaucer.

A curious statement occurs, in the *Life of Chaucer* prefixed to Urry's Edition, of a portrait of this poet, when he was about thirty years of age, at that time (1721) in the possession of George Greenwood of Chastleton in the county of Gloucester, esquire. I do not know where this painting is now to be found.

It only remains to give some account of the portrait of Chaucer, which is placed at the end of this work. The picture from which it is taken, and which is painted upon board, was found, about two years ago, by Mr. Richard Phillips, the publisher of these volumes, in the house, in the market-town of Huntingdon, in which Oliver Cromwel is said to have been born. Mr. Phillips purchased it on the spot, and it is now in his possession. As a curiosity, and a piece of antiquity which to this time had never been mentioned, it was thought worth while to have it engraved, and annexed to this publication.

It certainly bears no striking resemblance to the received portraits of Chaucer; and for that reason, beside others, it has been regarded

with an eye of incredulity by several connoisseurs. It is undoubtedly however very ancient ; and what is most material, the name of Chaucer, which is painted upon the picture, is pronounced by some of the best judges (particularly Mr. Tassaert of Dean Street) to be equal of age with the rest of the piece, and impossible to have been added afterward.

The person, whoever he is, that is represented in this picture, holds in his hand a wand, which has been interpreted by some of those who have seen it to be a staff of office, and supposed to have possibly belonged to Chaucer as comptroller of the customs. A paper lies upon the table near him, which the ingenious have in vain attempted to decipher, and which, if deciphered, might perhaps throw some light upon the subject of the picture. In one corner of the painting is a chest, with a representation in the front of it, of a combat, and a knight preparing to kill his adversary. This might possibly refer to the catastrophe of the story of Palamon and Arcite, or the Knightes Tale, the first in the series of the Canterbury Tales ; which in its original form was written by Chaucer while still a young man,

No. III, p. 248, Vol. II.

DESCRIPTION OF OLD-AGE, AN ALLEGORICAL
PAINTING ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE GARDEN OF
MIRTH.*From the Romaunt of the Rose, ver. 349—412.*

^a ELDE was ypainted after this,
 That shorter was a fote ^b iwis
 Than she was wont in her ^c yonghede;
^d Unneth her self she mighten fede;
 So feble and so olde was she,
 That faded was all her beauté;
 Full salowe' was waxen her colour;
 Her hedde for ^e hore was white as flour;
 Iwis ^f grete qualme ne were it none,
 Ne sinne, although her life were gone.

^a Old Age. ^b I guess. ^c youth. ^d Scarcely.

^e hoariness.

^f it would have been no great crime, could scarcely have excited a qualm, so miserable an object did she seem, to have killed her.

All woxen was her body ^s unwelde,
 And drie and ^h dwined all, for elde ;
 A foule, forwelked thing was she,
 That ^k whilom round and soft had ^l be.
 Her herés ^m shoken fast withall,
 As from her hedde they woulde fall ;
 Her facé ⁿ frounced and ^o forpined,
 And both her hondés lorne ^p fordwined ;
 So old she was, that she ne went
 A fote, but it were by ^q potent.

The time, that passeth night and daie,
 And restélesse travaileth ^r aie,
 And steleth from us privily,
 (That to us semeth ^s sikerly
 That it in one poinct dwelleth ever,
 And certes it ne resteth never,
 But goth so fast, and passeth ^r aie,
 That there ^t n'is man that thinken maie,

^s unweildy, rebellious to its tenant's purposes.

^h wasted. ⁱ much wrinkled. ^k formerly.

^l been. ^m shook. ⁿ shrivelled.

^o much pined, fallen in. ^p much wasted. ^q crutch;

^r always. ^s securely, certainly. ^t is no.

What timé that now present is,
 " Asketh at these grete clerkés this—);
 The timé, that maie not sojourne,
 But goeth, and maie ner retourne,
 As water that doune runneth ^v aie,
 But never droppe retourné maie,
 (There maie nothing as time endure,
 Metall, nor yerthly créature,
 For allé thing is ^w frette, and shall);
 The time eke, that ychaungeth all,
 And all ^x doth waxe and fostred be,
 And allé thing destroyeth he;
 The time that ^y eld'th our auncestours,
 And ^y eldeth kinges and emperours,
 And that us all shall overcomen,
 Er that deth us shall have ^z ynommen;

" Enquire; *th*, in the language of Chaucer, is the termination of the second person singular imperative.

^v always.

^w fretted, wasted.

^x maketh; *do* is commonly a verb transitive in Chaucer.

^y maketh old.

^z taken; part. from *to nim*. The prefix *y* does not, so far as can now be discovered, alter the sense; and therefore, in poetry, seems to serve the purpose merely of supplying the writer at pleasure with an additional syllable.

'The timé, that hath all in ^a welde
 To ^b elding folke ;——had made her elde
 So inly, that to my ^c wetting
 She might ne helpe her self nothing,
 But tourn'd ayen unto childhede ;
 She had nothing her self to lede,
^d Ne witte ne pithe within her hold,
 More than a child of two yere old.
 But nathélesse I trowe that she
 Was faire sometime and freshe to se,
 Whan she was in her rightfull age ;
 But she was past all that passage,
 And was a doted thing becomen :
 A furred cappe on had she ^e nommen ;
 Well had she cladde her self and warme,
 For cold might ellés doen her harme ;
 These oldé folke have alwaie cold,
^f Her kinde is soche, whan thei ben old.

^a in wield, in his power.

^b making old.

^c judgment.

^d Neither understanding, nor marrow within her frame.

^e taken.

^f Their.

No. IV, p. 256, Vol. II.

DISCOURSE ADDRESSED BY THE GOD OF LOVE TO
HIS VASSAL.

From the Romaunt of the Rose, ver. 2175—2950.

^a VILLANIE, at the beginning,
I woll, saied Love, over all thing,
Thou ^b leve; if that thou wolt ^c ybe
False, and trespace ^d ayenest me;
I curse and blame generally
All hem that loven ^a villanie;
For villanie maketh villaine,
And by his dedes a ^e chorle is seiné.
These villaines arne without pité,
Frendship and love, and all bounté;
I ^f n'll receive to my service
Hem that ben vilaines ^g of emprise.

^a Any thing unbecoming a gentleman.

^b reject.

^c *forte* ne be.

^d against.

^e churl is seen.

^f will not.

^g in their undertakings.

But understonde in thine entent,
 That this is not mine entendment
 To ^h clepen no wight in no age
 Onely gentill for his linage;
 But who so that is vertuous,
 And in his port not outrageous,
 Whan soche one thou seest ⁱ the beforne,
 Though he be not gentill yborne,
 Thou mayest well ^j seine this in soth,
 That he's gentill, because he doth
 As longeth to a gentil man;
 Of hem none other deme I can:
 For certainly withouten ^k drede
 A chorle is demed by his dede,
 Of hie or lowe, as ye maie se,
 Or of what kinred that he be ^l.

Ne saie ^m nought, for none evil will,
 Thing which that ⁿ is to holden still;

^h call, denominate.

ⁱ before thee, in thy company.

^j say.

^k doubt.

^l This paragraph has nothing correspondent to it in the original, Edition 1735.

^m not.

ⁿ ought to be concealed.

It is no ° worship to ^p misseie ;
 Thou maiest ensample take of ^a Keie,
 That was somtime for missaying
 Yhated bothe of old and yong ;
 As ferre as ^a Gawein the worthie
 Was praised for his curtesie,
 Kaie was hated, for he was fell,
 Of worde ^rdispitous and cruell :
 Wherefore be wise and ^saqueintable,
 Godelie of worde, and resonable,
^tBothé to lesse and eke to mare ;
 And whan thou comest ^v there men are,
 Loke that thou have in custome aie
 First to ^usalue hem, if thou maie ;
 And if it fall that of hem some
^uSalue the first, be thou not ^wdomme,
 But ^xquite hem curtesly anon,
 Without abiding, er thei gon.

For nothing eke thy tong applie
 To spoken wordes of ^vribaudrie ;

° worthyship, worthiness. ^p belie.

^a Two of Arthur's knights of the Round Table.

^r spiteful. ^s affable.

^t Both to small and (*mare*, more) great.

^v Orig. *par les rues*. ^u salute. ^w dumb.

^x requite. ^v ribaldry, profligacy.

To vilaine speche, in no degre,
^z Late ner thy lippe unbounden be ;
 For I nought holde him, in gode faith,
^a Curteis, that foulé wordés saith.
 And allé women serve and preise,
 And to thy power ^b her honour reise ;
 And if that any ^c missayere
 Dispise women, that thou maist ^d here,
 Blame him, and ^e bidde him holde him still ;
 And sette thy might, and al thy will,
 Women and ladies for to plesse,
 And to do thing that may hem ese,
 That thei ever speke gode of the,
 For so thou maist best praised be.

Loke that fro pride thou kepe ^f the wele,
 For thou maist both perceive and fele,
 That pride is both foly and sinne,
 And he, that pride hath him within,
 Ne may his herté in no wise
^z Meken ne souplen to service ;
 For pride is founde in every parte
 Contrarie unto Lovés arte :

^z Let. ^a Courteous. ^b their. ^c slanderer.
^d hear. ^e Orig. *fais qu'il se taise.* ^f thee.
^z Rênder meek or supple.

And he that loveth truély
 Should him containé jolily
 Withouten pride in sondry wise,
 And him disguisen in ^h queintice ;
 For queinte aray, withouten ⁱ drede,
 Is nothing proude, who taketh hede
 For freshe aray, as men may se,
 Withouten pride may often be.

Maintaine thy selfe ^j after thy rent
 Of robé and eke of garment
 For many a ^k sithé faire clothing
^l A man amendeth in mucche thing.

And loke alway that thei be shape
 (What garment that thou shalt ^m the make)
 Of him that can the best ydo,
 With al that ⁿ parteineth therto,
^o Pointés and sleves be wel ^p sittande,
 Ful right and streight upon the hande ;

^h trimness.ⁱ doubt.^j according to thy income.^k time.^l Greatly mends a man's appearance.^m thee.ⁿ appertains.^o Strings, tags.^p sitting, fitting.

Of ^a shone and botés, neue and faire,
 Loke at the lest thou have a paire,
 And that thei sitte so ^r fetously
 That these rude men may utterly
 Mervaile, ^s sith that thei sitte so plaine,
 How thei come ^t an or of againe.
^u Were streighté glovés, with ^w aumere
 Of silke, and alway with gode chere
^x Thou yeve, if that thou have richesse,
 And if thou have nought, spende the lesse;
 Alway be mery, if thou maie,
 But wasté not thy ^y gode alwaie.
 Have hatte of floures freshe as May,
 Chapelet of roses of^r Whitsondaie;
 For soche araie ^z costneth but lite.
 Thine hondés washe, thy tethe make white,
 And let no filthe upon the be;
 Thy nailés blacke if thou maiest se,
^a Voide it awaie ^b deliverly;
 And ^c kembe thine hedde right jolily:

^a shoes.^r neatly.^s since.^t on or off.^u Wear.^w aumener, purse.^x Give thou.^y fortune.^z costs but little.^a Clear.^b nimby.^c comb.

^d Farce not thy visage in no wise,
 For that of Love is nat the ^e emprise;
 For love doeth haten, as I finde,
 A beautie that com'th nat of ^f kinde.

Alwaie in herte ^g I redé the
 Full glad and mery for to be;
 And be as joifull as thou can;
 Love hath no joie of sorow'full man:
 That ill is full of curtesie,
 That [^h he] know'th in his maladie;
 For ever of love the sikennesse
 Is ⁱ meint with swete and bitternesse:
 The sore of love is mervailous;
 For now the lover is joious,
 Now can he ^j plain, now can he grone,
 Now can he singe, now maken mone;
 To dajé he plain'th for hevinesse,
^k To morue' he plain'th for jolinesse;
 The life of love is full contrarie,
 Whiche ^l stoundémele can often varie:

^d Trick. ^e procedure. ^f nature. ^g advise.

^h Love. ⁱ mixed. ^j lament.

^k To-morrow. ^l momentarily.

But if thou ^m canest mirthes make,
 That men ⁿ in gre woll gladly take,
 Doe it godely, I commaunde the ;
 For men should, where so er thei be,
 Doe thing that hem befitting is,
 For therof com'th gode.° loos and pris.

^p Wherof that thou be vertuous,
 Ne be nat straunge ne ^q daungerous :
 For if that thou gode rider be,
^r Pricke gladly that men maie the se ;
 In armés also if thou ^s conne,
 Pursue till thou a name hast wonne ;
 And if thy voice be faire and clere,
 Thou shalt maken no grete ^t daungere
 Whan ^u the to singe thei godely praie,
 It is thy worship for t' obaie.
 Also to you it longeth aie
 To harpe and ^w giterne daunce and plaie ;
 For if thou can well ^x fote and daunce,
 It maie the gretely doe avaunce.

^m canst. ⁿ in good part. ° laud and praise.

^p In whatever thing thou chancest to excel. ^q sparing.

^r Ride apace. ^s have knowledge. ^t difficulty.

^u thee. ^w guitar. ^x foot.

^y Emong eke, for thy ladie sake,
 Songés and complaints that thou make ;
 For that woll ^z meven in ^a her herte,
 Whan that thei ^b reden of thy smerte.

Loke that no man for ^e scarce the holde,
 For that maie greve the manifolde ;
 Reson woll that a lover be
 In his ^d yeftés more large and fre
 Than chorles that ben not of loving :
 For who therof ^e can any thing,
 He shall be ^f lefe aie for to yeve,
^z In londés lore who so would leve ;
 For he that through a ^b sodain sight,
 Or for a kissing, anon right
 Yave whole his herte in will and thought,
 And to him selfe kepeth right nought,
 After this gift 'tis but reson
 He give his gode ⁱ in a bandon.

Now woll I shortly here reherce
 Of that I have ysaied in verse

^y Also among thy accomplishments.

^z move in, influence. ^a their. ^b learn.

^c niggard. ^d gifts. ^e knoweth. ^f willing.

^z *Perhaps*, If we may believe the lore (*stories*) of foreign lands.

^b sudden. ⁱ in abandonment, to confusion.

All the ^jsentencé by and by,
 In wordés fewe compendiously,
 That thou the ^kbet maiest on hem thinke
^lWher so it be thou wake or winke;
 For the wordés do little greve
 A man to kepe, whan thei be breve.

Who so with Love woll gon or ride,
 He mote be ^mcurteis, voide of pride,
 Merie, and full of jolité,
 And of largesse ⁿa losed be.

First, I ^ojoigne the here in penaunce,
 That ever, without repentaunce,
 Thou set thy thought in thy loving
 To last withouten repenting,
 And think upon thy mirthes swete
 That shall ^pfolue' after whan ye mete.

And, for thou true to Love shalt be,
 I willen and commaunden the,

^j meaning.

^k better.

^l Whether.

^m courteous.

ⁿ free.

^o enjoin thee as a task.

^p follow.

That in one place thou set all whole
 Thy herte, withouten ^q halfen dole,
 For trecherie and ^r sikernesse ;
 For I lov'd never doublenesse :
 To many' his herte that woll ^s depart,
 ' Everiche shall have but little part ;
 But of him ^v drede I me right nought,
 That in one place setteth his thought :
 Therefore in ^u o place thou it set,
 And let it never ^w thennés flet ;
 For if thou yev'st it in ^x lening,
 I holde it but a wretched thing :
 Therefore yeveth it whole and quite
 And thou shalt have the more merite.
 If it be lent, than after ^y soen
 The bounté and the thanke is doen ;
 But in love a fre ^z yeven thing
 Requireth a grete ^a guerdoning.
 Yeve it in yeft all quite fully,
 And make thy gift debonairly,
 For men that yeft holden more dere
 That yeven is with gladsome chere :

^q half-measure.
^r security, sincerity.^s divide.^t Each one.^v doubt.^u one.^w thence depart.^x lending.^y soon.^z given.^a recompence.

That gifté nought to praisen is,
That a man yeveth ^b mal gre his.

Whan thou hast yev'n thy herte (as I
Have ^c said the heré openly),
Than aventurés shull ^d the fall
Whiche hard and hevy ben with all ;
For oft, whan thou bethinkest the
Of thy loving, where so thou be,
Fro folke thou must depart ^e in hie,
That none perceive thy maladie,
But hide thine harme thou must alone,
And go forth sole, and make thy mone.

Thou shalt no while be in ^f o state,
But whilom colde, and whilom ^g hate,
Now red as rose, now yelowé' and fade ;
Such sorowe' I trowe thou never hade :
^h Cotidien, ne the ⁱ quarteine,
It is not half so full of peine ;
For often timés it shal fal
In love, among thy painés al,

^b against his will. ^c directed thee. ^d befall thee.

^e in secret, to the upper part of the house.

^f one.

^g hot.

^h Quotidian.

ⁱ quartan.

That thou thy selfin all wholly
 Foryetten shall so utterly,
 That many timés thou shalt be
 Still as an image made of ^j tre,
^k Domme as a stone, without ^l stering
 Of fote or honde, without speking.
 And than, sone after al thy paine,
 To memorie shalt thou come againe,
 A man abashed ^m wonder sore ;
 And after sighen more and more :
 For ⁿ wit thou wele, withouten ^o wene,
 In such astate ful oft have bene,
 That have the evill of 'love assaide,
^p Where thorough thou art so dismaide.

After, a thought shal take the so,
 That thy love is ^q to ferre the fro :
 Thou shalt say, “ God ! what may this be,
 That I ne may my lady se ?
 Mine hert alone is to her go,
 And I abide al sole in wo,

^j tree, wood. ^k Dumb. ^l stirring. ^m wondrous.

ⁿ know. ^o guess, doubt. ^p On account of which.

^q too far from thee.

^r Departed fro mine owné thought,
 And with mine eyén se right nought.
 Alas ! mine eién sene ne may
 My carefull herté to ^s convay ;
 Mine hertés guide ^t but that they be,
 I praise no thing what er thei se.
 Shul thei abiden then ? Why, nay ;
 But gone and se without delay
 That whiche mine hert desireth so :
 For certainly, ^t but if thei go,
 A ^v fole my selfe I may well holde
 Whan I ne se what mine hert wolde ;
 Wherefore I wol gone her to sene,
 Or esed shall I never bene,
^t But that I have some tokening."
 Than gost thou forth without ^u dwelling ;
 But oft thou fail'st of thy desire,
^w Er thou maist come her any nere,
 And wastest in vain thy ^x passage ;
 Than fal'st thou in a newé rage,
 For want of sight thou ^y ginnest murne,
 And homwarde pensife dost returne :

^r Divided.
^s conduct.^t unless.^v fool.^u delay.^w Ere, before.^x journey, search.^y beginnest to mourn.

In great ^z mischefe than shalt thou be,
 For than againe shal come to the
 Sighés and plaintés with newe wo,
^a That no itching pricketh the so :
 Who wot it nought, he may go ^b lere
 Of hem that buyen love so dere.

No thing thine herte appesen maie,
^c That oft thou wolt gone and assaie
 If thou maist sene by aventure
 Thy livés joye, thine hertés cure ;
 So that by grace, if that thou might
 Attaine of her to have a sight,
 Than shalt thou done non other dede,
 But with that sight thine eyen fede :
 That fairé fresh whan thou maist se,
 Thine hert shal so ravished be,
 That ner thou woldest thy thanks ^d lete
 Ne remove, for to se that swete :
 The more thou seest, in sothfastnesse
 The more thou covit'st that swetenesse ;

^z adversity, distress.

^a More painful than any cuticular irritation or smart.

^b learn.

^c But.

^d let (withhold), nor take away.

The more thine herte ^e brenneth in fire,
 The more thine herte is in desire.
 For, who considreth ^f every dele,
 It may be likened ^g wonder wele,
 The paine of love, unto a ^h fere ;
 For evermore ⁱ thou nighest nere,
 In thought, or how so that it be
 (For very ^k sothe I tel it the),
 The hotter ever shalt thou brenne
 (As experience shall ^l the kenne),
 Where so thou com'st in any ^m coste :
 Who is next fire he brenneth moste.
 And yet forsothe, for al thine hete,
 Though thou for lové ⁿ swelte and swete,
 Ne for no thing thou felen may,
 Thou shalt not wille to passe away ;
 And, though thou go, yet must ^o the nede
 Thinken al day on her faire ^p hede,

^e burns. ^f exactly. ^g wondrous. ^h fire.

ⁱ nighest, approachest: the nearer thou approachest.

^k sooth, truth. ^l make thee know.

^m nearness, perhaps from the French, *à côté*.

ⁿ swelten and sweat. ^o thou need necessarily.

^p head, person.

Whom thou beheld with so gode will,
 And holde thy selfe ^a begiled ill
 That thou ne hadd'st none ^r hardiment
 To shewe her aught of thine entent :
 Thine herte ful sore thou wolt dispise,
 And eke ^s reprove of cowardice,
 That thou, so dull in every thing,
 Were domme for drede, without speking.
 Thou shalt eke thinke thou did'st foly,
^t That thou were her so fasté bie,
 And durst not venture the to say
 Some thing er that thou came away ;
 For thou haddest no moré ^u wonne
 To speke of her, whan thou ^w begonne :
 But yet, if she would for thy sake
^x In armés godely the have take,
 It should have be more worthe to the
 Than of tresour a grete plenté.

Thus shalt thou ^y morne and eke com-
 plaine,
 And get ^z enches'on to gon againe

^a ill-starred, betrayed by fortune.

^r boldness.

^s reprove, arraign.

^t fast by her.

^u opportunity.

^w art gone.

^x Have taken thee kindly in her arms.

^y mourn.

^z occasion.

Unto thy walke, or to thy place,
 Where thou behelde her ^a fleshly face;
 And, ^b n'ere for false suspicion,
 Thou woldest find occasion
 For to gone in unto her house;
 Thou ^c arné than so desirous
 A sight of her but for to have:
 If thou thine ^d honour mightest save,
 Or any erande mightest make
 Thider, for thy lovés sake,
 Ful faine thou woldest; but for drede
 Thou goest not, lest that men take hede.
 Wherefore I ^e rede, in thy going,
 And als in thine again comming,
 Thou be wel ware that men ^f ne wit;
 Feiné ^h the other cause than it
 To go that waie, or fasté bie;
 To ⁱ helen wel is no folie.

And, if so be, it happé the,
 That thou thy love there maiést se,

^a real.^b were it not.^c art then.

^d The honour of a knight lay in his exact consideration
for the scruples and reputation of the fair.

^e advise.^f also.^g observe not.^h thee, thou.ⁱ conceal.

In siker wise thou her ^k salewe;
 Wherwith thy coloure woll ^l transmewe,
 And eke thy bloud shal al to quake,
 Thy hewe eke chaungen for her sake;
 But word and wit, with chere ful pale,
 Shul wanten for to tell thy tale;
 And, if thou maist so ^m ferforth winne,
 That thou to ⁿ reson durst beginne,
 And woldest saine thre thinges or ^o mo,
 Thou shalt ful scarsly saine ^p the two;
 Though thou bethinke ^p the ner so wele,
 Thou shalt ^q foryeten yet somdele,
^r But if thou dele with trechery;
 For false lovers ^s mowe all fully
 Sain what ^t hem lust withouten dred,
 They be so double' in ^u her falshed;
 For thei in herte can thinke o thing,
 And saine an other' in ^u her speking.

And, whan thy speche is ended all
 Right thus to ^p the it shal befall;

^k salute.^l transmute, change.^m far.ⁿ discourse (with thy mistress).^o more.^p thee.^q forget.^r Unless.^s can.^t they wish.^u their.

If any worde than come to minde,
 That thou to say hast left behinde,
 Than thou shalt brenne in grete martire;
 For thou shalt brenne as any fire:
 This is the strife, and eke th' affraie,
 And the battil that lasteth ^w aie;
 This bargaine end may never take,
 But if that she thy pece wil make.

And, whan the night is come anon,
 A thousand angres shal come on;
 To bed as fast thou ^x wolt the dight,
 Where thou shalt have but smal delight;
 For, whan thou wenest for to slepe,
 So ful of painé shalt thou crepe,
 Sterte in thy bed about ful wide,
 And turne ful ofte on every side,
 Now downward ^y groffe, and now upright,
 And walow'in wo the longé night;
 Thine armés shalt thou sprede ^z a brede,
 As man in warré ^a forwerede:

^w for ever,

^y flat.

^a much wearied.

^x wilt prepare thee.

^z abroad, wide.

Than shal ^b the come a remembraunce
Of her shapé, and her semblaunce,
Wherto none other may be ^c pere.

And ^d wete thou wel, withouten ^e were,
That the shal ^f se somtime that night,
That thou hast her that is so bright,
Naked bitwene thine armés there,
Al sothfastnesse as though it were :
Thou shalt make ^g castels than in Spaine,
And dreme of joy, al but in vaine,
And ^h the deliten of right nought,
While thou so slombrest in that thought,
That is so swete and delitable ;
The whiche in sothe n'is but a fable,
For it ne shall no whilé last.

Than shalt thou sighe and wepé fast,
And say, “ Dere God ! what thing is this ?
My dreme is turned al amis,
Which was ful swete and apparent ;
But, now I wake, it is al ⁱ shent,

^b come to thee. ^c peer. ^d know. ^e doubt.

^f see, imagine, dream.

^g *Chateaux en Espagne* ; we say at present, Castles in the air.

^h thee. ⁱ ruined.

Now ^k yede this mery thought away ;
 Twenty times upon a day
 I would this thought would come againe,
 For it ^l alegeth wel my paine,
 It mak'th me ful of joyful thought,
 It ^m sleeth me that it lasteth nought :
 Ah, Lorde ! why n'ill ye me socoure ?
 The joye I trowe that I ⁿ langoure,
 The deth I wouldé me should ^o slo,
 While I lie in her armés two ;
 Mine harme is hard, withouten ^p wene,
 My grete unese ful ofte, I mene.
 But wouldé Love do so I might
 Have fully joye of her so bright,
 My paine were quitte me richély !

“ Alas, ^q to gret a thing aske I ;
 It is but folý, and wrong ^r wening,
 To aske so outrageous a thing !
 And who so asketh folily,
 He ^s mote be warned hastily ;
 And I ne wote what I may say,
 I am so ferre out of the way ;

^k is gone.

^l relieves.

^m slays, kills.

ⁿ languish for.

^o slay.

^p doubt. ^q too.

^r conceit.

^s must, should.

For I would have ful grete liking
 And ful grete joy of ^t lassé thing.
 For, would she of her gentillesse,
 Withouten more, me ^u onés kesse,
 It were to me a grete guerdon,
 Relese of all my passion.
 But it is harde to come therto ;
 Al is but foly that I do ;
 So highe I have mine herté sette,
 Where that I may no comfort gette.
 I ^w n'ote wher I say well or nought,
 But this I wote well in my thought,
 That it were ^x bette of her alone
 For to stinten my wo and mone,
 A loke on her I cast godely,
 Than for to have al utterly
 Of an other al whole the play.

“ Ah, Lord ! ^y where shal I bide the day,
 That er she shal my lady be ?
 He is ful cur'd, that may her se.

^t less.

^u once kiss,

^w wot not whether.

^x better: the sense is, The sight alone of her would do more to relieve my sorrow, than.

^y Perhaps, how should I sustain the happiness ?

Ah, God ! whan shal the dauning springe ?
 To ^zliggen thus is' an ^aangry thing ;
 I have no joy thus here to lie,
 Whan that my love is not me bie.
 A man to ^zlien hath grete ^bdisease,
 Which maie not slepe, ne rest in ese :
 I would it ^cdaw'd, and were now day,
 And that the night were went away ;
 For, were it daye, I would up rise.
 Ah, slowé sunne ! ^dshewe thine enprise ;
 Spede the to sprede thy bemés bright,
 And chace the derknesse of the night,
 To put away the ^estoundes strong,
 Whiche in me lasten al ^fto long !”

The night shalt thou continue so,
 Withouten rest, in paine and wo.
 If ^ger thou knew of love distresse,
 Thou shalt now lerne in that sikenesse ;
 And, thus enduring, shalt thou lie ;
 And rise on morrow up erly
 Out of thy bed, and ^hharneis the,
 Er ever dawning thou maist se :

^z lie.	^a wearisome.	^b uneasiness.	^c dawned.
^d begin thy career.	^e sorrows.	^f too.	
^g forte ner.	^h put on thy garments.		

Al privily than shalt thou gone,
 What wether' it be, thy selfe alone,
 For reine, or haile, for snow, for slete,
 Thider she dwell'th, that is so swete,
 The whiche may fall aslepé be,
 And think'th but little upon the.
 Than shalt thou go, ⁱful foule aferde,
 Loke if the gaté be ^kunsperde,
 And waite without in wo and paine,
 Ful ill a colde in winde and raine,—
 Than shalt thou go the dore before,
 If thou maist finden any shore,
 Or hole, or ^lreft, what ere it were,—
 Than shalt thou ^mstoupe, and lay to ⁿere,
 If thei within aslepé be,
 I mene al save thy lady ^ofre;
 Whom waking if thou maist asprie,
 Go, put thy selfe in jupardie,
 To aské grace, and ^pthe bimene,
 That she may ^qwete, withouten wene,
 That thou all night no rest hast had,
 So sore for her thou were ^rbestad.

ⁱ with great fear and caution.

^k unbarred.

^l rift. ^m stoop.

ⁿ ear.

^o free. ^p demcan thyself.

^q learn, without doubt.

^r distressed.

Women wel ought pité to take
 Of ^s hem that sorowen for ^t her sake ;
 And loke, for love of that ^u relike,
 That thou ne thinke none other like,
 For, whan thou hast so gret ^w anney,
 Shall kisse the er thou go away,
 And hold that in ful grete ^x deinté :
 And for that no man shall the se
 Before the house, ne in the way,
 Loke thou be gon againe ^y er day.
 Suché comming, and suche going,
 Suche hevinesse, and such walking,
 Maketh lovers, withouten wene,
 Under ^t her clothés, pale and lene :
 Love ne ^z lev'th coloure ne clerenesse ;
 Who loveth trewe hath no fatnesse ;
 Thou shalt wel by thy selfé se,
^a That thou must nedes assaied be :
 For men that shape hem other way,
 Falsely ^t her ladies to betray,
 No wonder is though thei be fatte ;
 With falsé othes ^t her loves thei gatte ;

^s them.^t their.^u relic, as we now say jewel.^w annoyance.^x dainty, estimation.^y ere, before.^z leaves.

in the forte Sith.

For ofte I se suche ^b losingeours
Fatter than abbots or priours.

Yet with o thing I woll the charge,
That is to say, that thou be ^c large
Unto the maide that her doth serve,
So best her thanke thou shalte deserve;
Yeve her giftés, and get her grace
For so thou maiést thanke purchase;
That she ^d the worthy holde and fre,
Thy lady, and al that may the se:
Also her servauntes worship aie,
And plesé as muché as thou may;
Grete gode through them may come to the,
Bicause with her thei ben privé;
They shall her tel how thei ^e the fande
Curteis and wise, and wel ^f doande,
And she shal preise ^d the wel the more.

Loke out of londe thou be not ^s fore:
And, if suche cause thou have, that the
Behov'th to gone out of countré,
Leve whole thine herté in hostage,
Till thou againe make thy passage;

^b hypocrites.^c bountiful.^d thee.^e found thee.^f doing.^s part. of fare, to go.

Thinke long to se the sweté thing,
That hath thine hert in her keping.

Now have I tolde the, in what wise
A lover shal do me service;
Do it than, if that thou wolt have
The mede, that thou dost after crave.

Whan Love al this had ^hboden me,
I said him, Sir, how may it be,
That lovers may, in such manere,
Endure the paine ye have said here?
I mervailen me wonder faste,
How any man may live or laste
In suché paine, and suche brenning,
In sorue', and thought, and suche sighing,
Aie unrelesed wo to make,
Wher so it be thei slepe or wake
In suche anoy continually;
As helpe me God, this mervaille I,
How man, but he were made of stele,
Might live a monthe such paines to fele!

The God of Love than said to me,
Frende, by the faith I owe to the,

^h bodden, bidden.

May none have gode, ⁱ but he it bie ;
 A man loveth more tenderlie
 The thing, that he hath bought most dere :
 For wete thou well, withouten were,
 In thanke that thing is taken more,
 For which a man hath suffred sore.
 Certes, no wo ne may attaine
 Unto the sore of lovés paine ;
 None evil therto may amounte ;
 No more than a man may counte
 The droppes that of the water be :
 For dry as wel the greté se
 Thou mightest, as the harmés tell
 Of them, that still with Lové dwell
 In service ; for ^k her peine hem ^l sleeth,
 And that eche man would fle the deeth.

And trowe, thei should never escape,
^m Ne were, that HOPE ⁿ couth them make
 Glad ; as a man in prison ^o sete,
 And may not gotten for to ete
 But barlie bred and water pure,
 And lieth in vermin and ordure ;

ⁱ unless he buy it.^k their.^l slays.^m Were it not.ⁿ is able to.^o set, placed.

With allé this yet can he live,
 Gode Hope suche comfort hath him yeve,
 Whiche ^p maketh wene that he shal be
 Reles'd, and come to liberté ;
 In Fortuné is full his trust,
 Though that he lie in strawe or dust,
 In Hope is al his sustaining.

So fare lovers in ^q her wening,
 Which Love hath ^r shitte in his prisoun ;
 Gode Hope is ^s her salvacioun ;
 Gode Hope (^t how soré that thei smerte)
 Yeveth hem both the will and herte
 To offre' ^s her bodie to martire ;
 For Hope so sore doth hem ^v desire
 To suffre' eche harme that men devise
 For joye that afterwarde shall rise.
 Hope ^u in desire catche victory ;
 In Hope, of Love is the glory,
 For Hope is all that Love maie yeve ;
^x N'ere Hope, thei should no lenger live.

^p makes him think.

^r shut. ^s their.

^v *in the sense of* prompt.

^x Were there not.

^q their conceptions.

^t however sore they smart.

^u with Desire brings.

Blessed be Hope, which with Desire
 Avaunc'th lovers in this manire !
 Gode Hope is curteise for to plesse,
 To kepe lovers from all disese ;
 Hope ^y kep'th his londe, and woll abide
 For any peril' that maie betide ;
 For Hope to lovers, as most chefe,
^z Doth hem endure all mischefe ;
 Hope is ^a her helpe, whan ^b mister is.
 And I shal yeve ^c the eke iwis
 Thre other thinges, that grete solace
 Doth to hem that be in my ^d lace.

The firsté gode, that may be founde
 To hem that in my lace be bounde,
 Is SWETE'-THOUGHT, for to recorde
 Thingé wherwith thou canst accorde
 Best in thine herté, ^e wher she be
 Thinking in absence gode to the.
 Whan any lover doth complaine,
 And liveth in distresse and paine,
 Than Sweté-thought shal come as ^f blive,
 Awaie his angre for to drive ;

^y keeps his ground. ^a causeth. their. ,
^b need. ^c thee. ^d net.
^e whether. ^f quickly.

It mak'th lovers have remembraunce
 Of comfort, and of highe plesaunce,
 That Hope hath ^s hight hem for to winne;
 For Thought anon than shal beginne,
 As ferre, God wot, as he ^h can finde,
 To make a mirrour of his minde
 For to beholde he wol not ⁱ let :
 Her person he shal fore him set,
 Her laughing eyen, ^k persaunt and clere,
 Her shape, her forme, her godely chere,
 Her mouth, that is so gracious,
 So swete, and eke so saverous,
 Of al her ^l feters shal take hede,
 His eyen with al her limmés fede.
 Thus Sweté-thinking shall aswage
 The paine of lovers, and ^m her rage;
 Thy joye shall double, without gesse,
 Whan thou think'st on her seemlinesse,
 Or of her laughing, or her chere,
 That to the made thy lady dere.
 This comferte wol I that thou take;
 And if the nexte thou wolte forsake,

^s promised.

^k piercing.

^h is able.

^l features.

ⁱ delay.

^m their.

Which is not lessé saverous,
Thou should'st not ben to daungerous.

The second shal be SWETE'-SPECHE,
That hath to many one be ^a leche,
To bring hem out of wo and ^o were,
And helpe many a bachelere,
And many a lady sent socour,
That havé loved paramoure,
Thorough speking, whan thei might here,
Of ^p her lovers to hem so dere :
To me it voideth al ^p her smerte,
The whiche is closed in ^p her herte ;
In herte it mak'th hem glad and light,
Speche, whan thei ^a mowe not haven sight.
And therfore nowe it com'th to minde,
In oldé ^r dawés as I finde,
That clerkés written that her knewe ;
There was a lady, freshe of hewe,
Whiche of her love maden a song,
On him for to remembre' among,
In which she said, “ Whan that I ^a here
Speken of him that is so dere

^a physician.

^a may.

^o weariness.

^r days.

^p their.

^s hear.

To me, it voideth allé smerte,
 I wis, he sitt'th so nere my herte;
 To speke of him at eve or morowe,
 It cureth me of al my sorowe;
 To me is none so high plesaunce,
 As of his person dalliaunce."
 She wist ful wel, that Swete-speking
 Comforteth in ful muché thing;
 Her love she had full well assaide;
 Of him she was full well ^tapaide;
 To speke of him her joye was set.

Therefore I ^urede the that thou get
 A felowe, that can wel concele,
 And kepe thy counsaile, and wel ^xhele;
 To whom go shewe wholly thine herte,
 Both ^ywele and wo, and joye and smerte;
 To get comforte to him thou go;
 And prevely, betwene you two,
 Ye shal speke of that godely thing,
 That hath thine hert in her keping,
 Of her beauté, and her semblaunce,
 And of her godely countenaunce;

^t pleased.

^x hide.

^u advise.

^y weal.

Of al thy state thou shalt him saie,
 And aske him counsaile, how thou maie
 Do any thing that maie her plesse :
 For it to the shal do gret ese,
 That he may wete thou trust him so
 Both of thy wele and of thy wo.
 And, if his herte to love be sette,
 His companie is ^z moche the bette ;
 For reson woll he show to the
 Al utterly his ^a privité,
 And what she is he loveth so
 To the plainly he shal ^b undo,
 Withouten drede of any shame
 Both tel her ^c renome and her name :
 Than shall he ^d forther ferre and nere,
 And namely to thy lady dere,
 In siker wise, ye every other
 Shal helpen as his owné brother,
 In trouthe withouten doublesse,
 And kepen close in sikernesse.
 For it is noble thing, ^e in fay,
 To have a man thou ^f darsté say

^z much the better.^a secret.^b unfold.^c repute.^d assist thee.^e in faith.^f durst tell.

Thy privy counsaile ^s every dele ;
 For that woll comforte the right wele,
 And thou shalt holde the wel apaied,
 Whan suche a frende thou hast assaied.

The thirdé gode of grete comfort,
 That yev'th to lovers most disport,
 Cometh of sight and beholding,
 That ^h cleped is SWETE'-LOKING ;
 The whiché may none esé do,
 Whan thou art ferre thy lady fro:
 Wherfore thou ⁱ prese alway to be
 In placé where thou maist her se;
 For it is thing most ameraus,
 Most delitable', and saverous,
 For to aswage a mannés sorow,
 To sene his lady by the morow:
 For it is a ful noble thing,
 Whan that thine eyén have meting,
 With that reliké precious,
 Whereof thei be so desirous ;
 But al daie after sothe it is
 Thei have no drede to fare amis,

^s entire.

^h called.

ⁱ be eager.

Thei dreden neither winde ne raine,
Ne yet non other maner paine.

For, whan thine eyen were thus in blisse,
Yet of ^k her curtesie, iwisse,
Alone thei can not have ^k her joye ;
But to the herté thei convoye
Part of ^k her blisse, to him ¹ thou sende,
Of al this harme to make amende.
The eye is a gode messangere,
Which can to th' hert in suche manere
Tidingés sende that he hath sene,
To void him of his painés clene ;
Wherof the hert rejoyseth so,
That a grete partie of his wo
Is void, and put away to flight.
Right as the derknesse of the night
Is chas'd with clerenesse of the mone ;
Right so is al his wo ful sone
Devoided clene, whan that the sight
Beholden may that freshé wight,
Whiche that the hert desireth so,
That al his derknesse is ago :
For than the herte is all at ese,
Whan ^m thei sene that that maie hem plese.

^k their.

¹ *forte* they.

^m the eyes.

Now have I declar'd the al out
 Of that thou were in drede and doute ;
 For I have tolde the faithfully
 What the may curen utterly,
 And al lovers that wollen be
 Faithful and of stabilité.
 GODE-HOPE alway kepe by thy side,
 And SWETE'-THOUGHT make eke abide,
 SWETE'-LOKING, and SWETE'-SPECHE ;
 Of al thine harmes thei shal be ⁿ leche ;
 Of ^o bale, thou shalt have grete plesaunce :
 Yf thou canst bide in sufferaunce,
 And serven wele without ^p feintise.
 Thou shall be ^a quite of thine emprise
 With more guerdoun, if that thou live ;
 But ^r al this time this I the yeve.

ⁿ physician.

^o mischief, sorrow.

^p feigning, hypocrisy, dissimulation.

^a quit of thy undertaking.

^r *forte* at.

No. V.

[The following official papers are printed nearly according to the model exhibited in Rymer's Foedera. To persons unaccustomed to the inspection of our ancient records, it may be proper to observe, that, though here given in words at length for the purpose of rendering them more generally intelligible, they are interspersed in the originals with a multiplicity of contractions and abbreviations. The marks of contraction have frequently a definite meaning; but, in other cases, particularly in the terminations of words, the letters omitted can only be supplied in the manner which the construction and context may appear to require, and every reader is at liberty to supply them as his judgment or skill in conjecture may suggest.

In one circumstance the scheme of printing here employed, differs from that in Rymer. Our old records and Latin compositions of the middle ages universally omit the *a* in the diphthong *æ*; that is, they give *regine*, *Anglie*, *predictum*, &c. in the room of *reginaæ*, *Angliæ*, *prædictum*, &c. It did not appear that this

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singularity could create much obscurity to any one moderately skilled in the original language ; and it therefore seemed most eligible in this point, to exhibit the Latin of our ancestors to the eye of the curious, precisely as they wrote it.]

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1367. **R**EX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, et pro bono servicio quod dilectus valettus noster, Galfridus Chaucer, nobis impendit, et impendet in futurum, concessimus ei viginti marcas, percipiendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Sancti Michaelis et Pasche, per equales portiones, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi, vel quousque pro statu suo aliter duxerimus ordinandum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud castrum de Quenesburgh, vicesimo die Junii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 41 E. 3, p. 1, m. 13.

No. VI.

PRO DOMICELLIS PHILIPPE NUPER REGINE
ANGLIE.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

1370.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, et pro bono servicio quod dilecta nobis, Alicia de Preston, nuper domicella Philippe, nuper regine Anglie, consortis nostre, eidem consorti nostre, dum vixit, impendit, concessimus ei decem marcas, percipiendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Pasche et Sancti Michaelis, ad totam vitam ipsius Alicie, per equales portiones.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium vicesimo die Januarii.

CONSIMILES literas habent subscripte, nuper domicelle ipsius regine, de summis subscriptis, ad scaccarium predictum, ad totam vitam suam percipiendis, sub eadem data; videlicet,

Matillis Fisher, de decem marcis per annum.

Johanna Kauley, de decem marcis per annum.

Elizabeth Pershore, de decem marcis per annum.

Johanna Cosin, de centum solidis per annum.

Philippa Pycard, de centum solidis per annum.

Agatha Lyngeyn, de centum solidis per annum.

Matillis Radescroft, de quinque marcis per annum.

Agnes de Saxilby, de quinque marcis per annum.

Pat. 43, E. 3, p. 2, m. 1.

No. VII.

PRO PROTECCIONE.

GALFRIDUS Chaucer, qui in obsequium nostrum ad partes transmarinas de precepto nostro profecturus est, habet literas regis de proteccione, cum clausula, Volumus, &c. usque ad festum Sancti Michaelis proximo futurum duraturas. 1370.

Presentibus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, vicesimo die Junii.

Pat. 44 E. 3, p. 2, m. 20.

No. VIII.

PRO NUNCIIS AD TRACTANDUM CUM DUCE
JANUE.

1372. **R**EX universis et singulis ad quorum notitiam
presentes litere pervenerint, salutem.

Noveritis quod nos,

De fidelitate et circumspeccione provida
dilectorum et fidelium nostrorum,

Jacobi Pronan,

Johannis de Mari, civis Januensis,

Et Galfridi Chaucer, scutiferi nostri,
plenam fiduciam reportantes,

Ipsos, Jacobum, Johannem et Galfridum, et
duos ipsorum (quorum prefatum Johannem
unum esse volumus), nuncios et procuratores
nostros facimus et constituimus speciales:

Dantes et committentes eis plenam, tenore
presentium, potestatem et mandatum speciale
tractandi pro nobis, et in nomine nostro, cum
nobili viro, Dominico de Campo Fregoso, duce
Januensi, te ejus concilio, nec non civibus,
probis hominibus, et communitate civitatis
Janue,

Super eo (videlicet), quod iidem cives, et

probi homines, ac mercatores ejusdem civitatis, inhabitationem suam, in aliquo loco, seu villa aliqua, super costeram maris in regno nostro Anglie, pro applicatione carricarum et navium dicte civitatis cum bonis et mercandis eorumdem civium et mercatorum, aptam et competentem habere valeant,

Nec non super franchisesiis, libertatibus, immunitatibus et privilegiis, eisdem civibus et mercatoribus ad dictum locum et alibi in dictum regnum nostrum causa mercandisandi accessuris vel moraturis, per nos concedendis,

Et ad nos, de omnibus et singulis que sic inter nos et ipsos, ducem et concilium suum, ac cives, mercatores et communitatem, tractata fuerint, distincte et aperte certificandum.

In cujus, &c.

Datum apud Westmonasterium, duodecimo die Novembris, anno regni nostri Francie tricesimo tertio, regni vero nostri Anglie quadragesimo sexto.

Franc. 46 E. 3, m. 8.

No. IX.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1374. **R**EX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus dilecto armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, unum pycher vini, percipiendum quolibet die in portu civitatis nostre Londonie, per manus pincerne nostri vel heredum nostrorum pro tempore existentis, vel ejusdem pincerne locum tenentis, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Wyndesore, vicesimo tertio die Aprilis.

Per brece de privato sigillo.

Pat. 48, E. 3, p. 1, m. 20

No. X.

DE OFFICIO CONTRAROTULATORIS CONCESSO.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

1374.

Sciatis quod concessimus dilecto nobis, Galfrido Chaucer, officium contrarotulatoris custume et subsidii lanarum, coriorum, et pellium lanatarum, in portu Londonie, habendum quamdiu nobis placuerit,

Percipiendo in officio illo tantum, quantum alii contrarotulatores custume et subsidii hujusmodi in portu predicto hactenus percipere consueverunt :

Ita quod idem Galfridus rotulos suos, dictum officium tangentes, manu sua propria scribat, et continue moretur ibidem, et omnia que ad officium illud pertinent, in propria persona sua, et non per substitutum suum, faciat et exequatur,

Et quod altera pars sigilli, quod dicitur *coket*, in custodia ipsius Galfridi remaneat, quamdiu officium habuerit supradictum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste meipso apud Westmonasterium, octavo die Junii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 48 E. 3, p. 1, m. 7.

No. XI.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1375. **R**EX omnibus, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, commisimus dilecto scutifero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, custodiam omnium terrarum et tenementorum, cum pertinenciis, que fuerunt Edmundi Stapelgate defuncti, qui de nobis tenuit in capite, et que, per mortem ejusdem Edmundi, et ratione minoris etatis heredis ejusdem Edmundi, in manu nostra existunt, habendam, cum omnibus ad custodiam illam spectantibus, usque ad legitimam etatem heredis predicti,

Una cum maritagio ejusdem heredis sine disparagatione,

Absque aliquo nobis inde reddendo, seu solvendo, pro custodia et maritagio predictis,

Ita quod idem Galfridus vastum et destructionem in eisdem terris et tenementis non faciat; set servicia rearia, et omnia alia honora, eisdem terris et tenementis incumbencia, faciat et sustentet, quamdiu custodiam habuerit supradictam.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, octavo
die Novembris.

Per breve de privato sigille

Pat. 49 E. 3, p. 2, m. 8.

No. XII.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1376. **REX** omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus dilecto armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, sexaginta et undecim libras, quatuor solidos, et sex denarios, de precio septem saccorum et dimidii, trium petrarum, et sex librarum lane, nobis forisfactorum, pro eo quod Johannes Kent de Londonia lanas illas usque Durdraught, absque custuma seu subsidio nobis inde solutis, seu licencia inde a nobis habita, duxit, et quam quidem summam versus ipsum Johannem ex causa predicta recuperavimus, ut dicitur, habendas de dono nostro.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, duodecimo die Julii.

*Per ipsum regem, nunciante
Rogerio de Bellocampo, ca-
merario regis.*

Pat. 50 E. 3, p. 1, m. 5.

No. XIII.

PRO PROTECCIONE.

GALFRIDUS Chaucer, armiger regis, qui in 1377.
obsequium regis, in quibusdam secretis negociis
regis, ad partes transmarinas de precepto regis
profecturus est, habet literas regis de pro-
teccione, cum clausula, Volumus, &c. usque
ad festum Sancti Michaelis proxime futurum
duraturas.

Presentibus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, duo-
decimo die Februarii.

Franc. 51 E. 3, m. 7.

No. XIV.

PRO PROTECCIONE.

1377. **G**ALFRIDUS Chaucer, qui in obsequium nostrum ad partes transmarinas de precepto nostro profecturus est, habet literas regis de proteccione, cum clausula, Volumus, &c. usque ad festum Sancti Petri de Vinculis proxime futurum duraturas.

Presentibus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, vicesimo octavo die Aprilis.

Franc. 51 E. 3, m. 5.

No. XV.

PROCESSUS FACTUS AD CORONACIONEM DOMINI
REGIS ANGLIE RICARDI SECUNDI POST CON-
QUESTUM, ANNO REGNI SUI PRIMO.

DECEDENTE, de nutu summi preceptoris, 1377.
felicissimo, serenissimo et potenti rege Angliæ
et Francie, domino Edwardo Tertio post Con-
questum, vicesimo primo die mensis Junii, anno
Domini millesimo trecentesimo septuagesimo
septimo, et anno regni sui quinquagesimo primo,
successit ei rex Ricardus Secundus, filius Ed-
wardi, nuper principis Wallie, primogeniti dicti
regis Edwardi; et, cum tractaretur et provisum
fuisset de solempniis coronacionis ipsius regis
Ricardi, die Jovis, in crastino translacionis
Beati Swithini tunc proxime sequentis cele-
brande,

Johannes, rex Castelle et Legionis, dux
Lancastrie, coram dicto domino rege et consilio
suo comparens, clamavit, ut comes Leycestrie,
officium senescalie Angliæ, et ut dux Lancastrie,
ad gerendum principalem gladium domini regis,
vocatam Curtana, die coronacionis ejusdem
regis, et ut comes Lincolnie, ad scindendum et

ad secundum coram ipso domino rege sedente
ad mensam dicto die coronacionis, &c. &c. &c.

ET MEMORANDUM, quod prefatus dux,
die Jovis proximo ante coronacionem pre-
dictam, sedebat, de precepto regis, tanquam
senescallus Anglie, in alba aula regii palatii
Westmonasterii, prope capellam regalem, et
inquirebat diligenter que et qualia officia, seu
feoda, dicto die per quoscunque facienda vel
optinenda fuerant :

Et, cum, hoc eodem die Jovis, publice
proclamari fecit, quod tam magnates quam alii,
qui alia officia ad coronacionem predictam
facere, seu feoda aliqua optinere, clamare vel-
lent, billas et petitiones suas, clamea sua
continentes, coram ipso senescallo, vel ejus in
hac parte locum tenentibus, preferri facerent
indilate :

Super quo diversa officia et feoda, tam per
petitiones quam oretenus, coram ipso senescallo
exacta et vendicata extiterunt, in forma que
subsequitur :

[*Inter alia :*]

ITEM predictus comes Arundellie porrexit
in curiam quandam aliam petitionem in hec
verba :

AL ROI de Castelle et de Lyons, duc de Lancastre, et seneschall d'Engleterre, supplie Richard comte de Arundelle et de Surraie, de lui recevre affaire son office de chief butiler, quel lui appartient de droit pur le comte d'Arundelle, recevant les feez et duez :

Et super hoc quidam Edmundus, filius et heres Edmundi de Staplegate, exhibuit quandam aliam petitionem sub hac forma :

A MON tres honer seigneur, le roi de Castelle et de Lyons, duc de Lancastre, et seneschall d'Engleterre, monstre Esmond, fitz et heir Esmond Stablegait, que, come le dit Esmond, tient de nostre seigneur le roi en chief le manoir de Bilsynton en le comte de Kent, par les services destre botiller de nostre seigneur le roi a sa coronement, come pleinement appiert en le livre des fees de serjanties en Leschequer nostre seigneur le roi, et a cause que le dit Esmond le pier morust seisi de mesme le manoir en son demesne come de fee; mesme cest Esmond le fitz adonque esteant demz age, nostre seigneur le roi, laiel nostre seigneur le roi^s qore, est seisit le dit Esmond le fitz en sa garde, par

^s qui or est.

cause que fuist trove en mesme le livere que le dit manoir fuist tenuz par an par tieux services, et prist les profitz de mesme le manoir par quatre anz comé de sa garde, et puis commist la dite garde ove le mariage de dit Esmond le fitz a Geffray Chausyer; pour que le garde et mariage le dit Esmond le fitz paia au dit Geffray cent et quatre livres: par quoi le dit Esmond le fitz soi profre de faire le dit office de botiller, et prie qil a ce soit receu, prenant les fees au dit office ancienement duez et custumables :

INTELLECTIS autem petitionibus predictis, auditisque quam plurimis recordis, rationibus et evidenciis, tam pro prefato comite, quam pro predicto Edmundo, curie monstratis, videbatur curie dictum negocium, propter multiplicationem negociorum et temporis brevitate, ante predictam coronacionem finaliter discuti non posse: et eo pretextu;

Necnon pro eo quod per recordum de scaccario est compertum, quod antecessores ipsius comitis, postquam dictum manerium de Bilsyngton ab eis alienatum extitit, fuerunt in possessione dicti officii temporibus hujusmodi coronacionum;

Et non est compertum nec allegatum pro

predicto Edmundo, quod aliquis antecessorum suorum aliquo tempore fecit officium predictum ;

Dictum fuit prefato comiti quod ipse officium predictum ad presentem coronacionem faceret, et feoda debita perciperet :

Jure ipsius Edmundi, seu aliorum quorumcunque, in omnibus semper salvo.

Et sic idem comes officium illud perfecit.

Claus. 1 R 2, m. 45.

No. XVI.

EXITUS PASCHÆ, ANNO RICARDI SECUNDI
QUARTO, 24^o. MAII.

1381. **GALFRIDO** Chaucer,—cui dominus rex Edvardus, avus regis hujus, viginti marcas annuas, ad scaccarium ad totam vitam suam percipiendas, pro bono servitio per ipsum eidem domino regi Edvardo impenso, per literas suas patentes concessit, quas quidem literas dominus rex nunc confirmavit,—in denariis sibi liberatis, per assignacionem sibi factam, isto die, in persolucionem decem marcarum sibi liberandarum de hujusmodi certo suo, videlicet, pro termino Paschæ ultimo præterito, per breve suum de liberato hoc termino.

vi^l xiijs iiijs^d.

Eidem Galfrido,—cui dominus rex nunc viginti marcas annuas, ad scaccarium ad totam vitam suam percipiendas, pro bono servitio per ipsum eidem domino regi impenso et impendendó, et in recompensacionem unius picheræ vini, per dictum dominum regem Edvardum concessæ, quolibet die in portu civitatis Londoniæ per manus pincernæ ejusdem regis avi et hæredum suorum, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi, per-

ciendæ, ultra prædictas viginti sibi per dictum avum concessas, et per dictum dominum regem nunc confirmatas, per literas suas patentes concessit,—in denariis sibi liberatis, per eandem assignacionem, in persolucionem decem marcarum sibi liberandarum de hujusmodi certo suo, videlicet, pro termino Paschæ præterito, per breve suum de liberato inter mandata de hoc termino.

vi^l xij^s iij^d.

Philippæ Chaucer, —nuper uni domicellarum Philippæ, nuper reginæ Angliæ, cui dominus rex Edvardus, avus regis hujus, decem marcas annuas, ad scaccarium ad totam vitam suam percipiendas, pro bono servitio per ipsam, tam eidem domino regi, quam dictæ reginæ, impenso, per literas suas patentes concessit, quas quidem literas dominus rex nunc confirmavit,—in denariis sibi liberatis, per manus prædicti Galfridi, mariti sui, in persolucionem quinque marcarum sibi liberandarum de hujusmodi certo suo, videlicet, pro termino Paschæ proximo præterito per breve suum de liberato inter mandata de hoc termino.

lxvj^s viij^d.

Rymer, Mss, in Museo Britannico,
Ric. II. Vol. II.

No. XVII.

DE CONTRAROTULATORE CONSTITUTO.

1382. **R**EX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod concessimus dilecto nobis, Galfrido Chaucer, officium contrarotulatoris parve custume nostre in portu Londonie, habendum et exercendum, per se, vel sufficientem deputatum suum pro quo respondere voluerit, quamdiu nobis placuerit,

Percipiendo in officio illo vadia consueta :

Volentes quod altera pars sigilli nostri, quod dicitur *coket*, in portu predicto, in custodia ipsius Galfridi, seu dicti deputati sui, remaneat, quamdiu officium habuerit supradictum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, octavo die Maii.

Pat. 5 R. 2, p. 2, m. 15.

No. XVIII.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX collectoribus custumarum et subsidiorum suorum in portu Londonie, salutem. 1384.

Quia licenciam dedimus dilecto nobis, Galfrido Chaucire, contrarotulatori nostro custumarum et subsidiorum predictorum in portu predicto, quod ipse se per unum mensem, pro quibusdam urgentibus negociis ipsum tangentibus, a portu predicto absentare possit,

Ita quod sufficientem deputatum suum, ad officium predictum bene et fideliter per idem tempus faciendum et exercendum, pro quo respondere voluerit, faciat,

Vobis mandamus, quod, capto sacramento de sufficiente deputato ejusdem Galfridi, de officio predicto in absentia sua bene et fideliter faciendo, predictum Galfridum ab officio suo predicto per tempus predictum absentare per mittatis.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, vicesimo quinto die Novembris.

Per ipsum regem.

Claus. 8 R. 2, m. 30.

No. XIX.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER

1385. **REX** omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus, et licenciam dedimus dilecto nobis, Galfrido Chaucer, contrarotulatori customarum et subsidiorum nostrorum in portu civitatis nostre Londonie, quod ipse officium predictum, per sufficientem deputatum suum pro quo respondere voluerit, facere et exercere possit, quamdiu idem Galfridus in officio steterit supradicto,

Absque impedimento collectorum customarum et subsidiorum nostrorum predictorum in portu predicto pro tempore existentium, seu aliorum quorumcunque.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium decimo septimo die Februarii.

Per ipsum regem.

Pat. 8 R. 2, p. 2, m. 31.

No. XX.

PRO JOHANNE SCALBY.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

1288.

Sciatis quod,

Cum nos, vicesimo tercio Marcii, anno regni nostri primo, per literas nostras patentes, sub magno sigillo nostro, approbaverimus et confirmaverimus concessionem factam dilecto armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, per dominum Edwardum, nuper regem Anglie, avum nostrum, de viginti marcis, percipiendis singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Sancti Michaelis et Pasche, per equales portiones, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi, vel quousque idem avus noster pro statu suo aliter dūceret ordinandum :

Ac postmodo, decimo octavo Aprilis, anno predicto, per quasdam alias literas nostras patentes, sub magno sigillo nostro, concesserimus eidem Galfrido, in recompensationem unius pycher vini per diem, per prefatum avum nostrum, eidem Galfrido concessi, et pro bono servicio quod ipse nobis impendebat et impenderet, viginti marcas, percipiendas singulis

annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi, ad terminos Sancti Michaelis et Pasche, per equales portiones (ultra viginti marcas sibi per prefatum avum nostrum concessas, per dictas literas suas patentes per nos confirmatas, percipiendas ad terminos predictos, per equales portiones, ut predictum est, prout in eisdem literis plenius continetur):

Nos, ad supplicationem prefati Galfridi, pro eo quod ipse dictas literas nostras nobis in cancellaria nostra restituit cancellandas,

De gracia nostra speciali, et pro bono servicio quod dilectus nobis, Johannes Scalby, nobis impendet in futurum, concessimus eidem Johanni dictas quadraginta marcas percipiendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Sancti Michaelis et Pasche, per equales portiones, ad totam vitam ipsius Johannis, vel quousque pro statu suo aliter duxerimus ordinandum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, primo die Maii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 11 R. 2, p. 2, m. 1.

No. XXI.

DE CLERICO OPERACIONUM REGIS CONSTITUTO.

REX omnibus et singulis vicecomitibus, majoribus, ballivis, ministris, et aliis fidelibus suis, tam infra libertates quam extra, ad quos, &c. salutem. 1389.

Sciatis quod nos,

De fidelitate & circumspeccione dilecti nobis Galfridi Chaucer confidentes,

Constituimus et assignavimus ipsum Galfridum clericum operationum nostrarum apud palacium nostrum Westmonasterii, turrim nostram Londonie, castrum de Berkhamstede, maneria nostra de Kenyngton, Eltham, Claryndon, Shene, Byflete, Childerne-Langeley et Feckenham, necnon logiam nostram de Hathebergh in foresta nostra de Nova Foresta, ac logias nostras infra parcos nostros de Claryndon, Childerne-Langeley et Feckenham, et mutas nostras pro falconibus nostris juxta Charyngcrouch; necnon gardinorum, stagnorum, molendinorum ac clausurarum, tam parcorum predictorum, quam omnium aliorum parcorum ad eadem palacium, turrim, castra, maneria, logias et mutas pertinentium:

Et ad latomos, carpentarios, et alios operarios et laboratores quoscunque, qui operacionibus nostris predictis necessarii fuerint, ubicunque inveniri poterunt, infra libertates et extra (feodo ecclesie dumtaxat excepto), per se et deputatos suos, eligendos et capiendos, et in dictis operacionibus nostris ponendos, super eisdem operacionibus nostris ad vadia nostra moraturos :

Ac eciam ad petras, meremium, tegulas, cindulas, vitrum, ferrum, plumbum, et omnia alia, necessaria pro operacionibus nostris predictis, ac cariagium pro eisdem petris, meremio, tegulis, cindulis, vitro, ferro, plumbo, et aliis necessariis, ad loca predicta, pro denariis nostris per ipsum Galfridum solvendis, per se et deputatos suos capiendis et providendis :

Nec non ad quascunque soluciones, tam pro vadiis dictorum operariorum, quam pro empcionibus, providenciis, et cariagiis, et aliis misis et expensis quibuscunque, dictas operationes qualitercunque tangentibus, per visum et testimonium contrarotulatoris nostri operacionum predictarum pro tempore existentis, faciendas :

Et ad computandum de denariis quos super expensis operacionum predictarum percipiet per visum et testimonium prefati contrarotulatoris :

Et ad operarios, qui pro operacionibus predictis, retenti fuerint, qui ab eisdem operacionibus sine licencia nostra, vel ipsius Galfridi, recesserint, reducendos; et ad omnes quos in hac parte contrarios invenerit seu rebelles, arestandum et capiendum et eos in prisonis nostris mancipandos, in eisdem moraturos, quousque securitatem invenerint de serviendo in operacionibus nostris, prout eis injungetur ex parte nostra:

Et ad inquirendum per sacramentum proborum et legalium hominum de comitatu ubi opus fuerit, per quos rei veritas melius sciri poterit, si meremium vel petre, tegule vel cindule, vitrum, ferrum, plumbum, seu alia necessaria, pro dictis operacionibus empta et provisa, asportata vel elongata fuerint; et ad eadem meremium, petras, tegulas, cindulas, vitrum, ferrum, plumbum, seu alia necessaria, sic elongata, ubicunque fuerint, infra libertates et extra, reduci et restitui facienda:

Et ad ramos, corticem, et alia residua de arboribus pro dictis operacionibus provisis ad opus nostrum, per visum et testimonium dicti contrarotulatoris vendenda, et nobis de denariis inde convenientibus respondendum:

Percipiendo pro vadiis suis in officio predicto

duos solidos per diem de denariis nostris supradictis.

Et ideo vobis mandamus, quod eidem Galfrido, ac deputatis suis, in premissis omnibus et singulis faciendis et exequendis intendentes sitis, consulentes et auxiliantes, quociens et prout per ipsum Galfridum, seu deputatos suos, ex parte nostra fueritis requisiti.

In cujus, &c. quamdiu idem Galfridus se bene et fideliter in eodem officio gesserit, duraturas.

Teste rege apud castrum de Wyndesore, duodecimo die Julii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 13 R. 2, p. 1, m. 30.

No. XXII.

DE CAPELLA CASTRI REGIS WYNDESORE
EMENDANDA.

REX dilecto armigero nostro Galfrido Chaucer, 1390.
clerico operacionum nostrarum, salutem.

Scias quod assignavimus te ad capellam nostram
collégialem Sancti Georgii infra castrum nostrum
de Wyndesore, que minatur ruine, et in punctu
ad terram cadendi existit, nisi cicius facta et
emendata fuerit, sufficientem fieri faciendam :

Et ad latomos, carpentarios, et alios operarios
ac laboratores, pro operacionibus ejusdem capelle
necessarios, ubicunque, infra libertates vel extra
(feodo ecclesie excepto), inveniri poterunt, per te
et deputatos tuos, eligendos et capiendos, et eos
super operacionibus predictis ponendos, ibidem
ad vadia nostra, quamdiu indiguerit, moraturos :

Et ad petras, meremium, vitrum, plumbum,
et omnia alia pro operacionibus predictis neces-
saria, et etiam cariagium pro premissis ad castrum
nostrum predictum, ad locum ubi dicta capella
facta fuerit, ducenda et capienda, pro denariis
nostris rationabiliter solvenda, tam pro premissis,
quam pro cariagio predicto, per supervisum et testi-

monium contrarotulatoris operacionum nostrarum palatii nostri Wesmonasterii :

Et ad omnes illos, quos in hac parte contrarios inveneris seu rebelles, capiendos, et prisonis nostris mancipandos, ibidem moraturos, quousque de eis aliter duxerimus ordinandum.

Et ideo tibi precepimus quod circa premissa diligenter intendas et exequaris in forma predicta.

Damus autem universis et singulis vicecomitibus, majoribus, ballivis, ministris, et aliis fidelibus et subditis nostris, tam infra libertates quam extra, tenore presentium, in mandatis, quod tibi et deputatis tuis predictis intendentes sint, consulentes et auxiliantes, prout decet.

In cujus, &c. per triennium duraturas.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, duodecimo die Julii.

Per billam de privato sigillo.

REX dilecto nostro, Willelmo Hanney, contrarotulatori operacionum palatii nostri Wesmonasterii, salutem.

Sciatis quod,

Cum, per literas nostras patentes, assignaverimus dilectum armigerum nostrum, Galfridum Chaucer, clericum operacionum nostrarum, ad capellam nostram collegialem, &c. *ut supra usque ibi supervisum, & tunc sic*, et testimonium vestra,

prout in literis patentibus inde confectis plenius continetur,

Nos, de fidelitate et circumspeccione vestris plenius confidentes, assignavimus vos, ad quoscunque denarios per prefatum Galfridum, super reparationem et emendacionem capelle predicte apponendos, et pro cariagio et aliis premissis solvendos, contrarotulandum, et super computo suo ad scaccarium nostrum testificandum :

Et ideo vobis mandamus quod circa premissa diligenter intendatis, et ea faciatis et exequamini in forma predicta.

In cujus, &c. per triennium duraturas.

Teste, *ut supra*.

Per billam de privato sigillo.

Pat. 14 R. 2, p. 1, m. 33.

No. XXIII.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1394. **R**EX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gracia nostra speciali, et pro bono servicio quod dilectus armiger noster, Galfridus Chaucer, nobis impendit, et impendet in futurum, concessimus eidem Galfrido viginti libras, percipiendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Pasche et Sancti Michaelis, per equales portiones, ad totam vitam suam.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, vicesimo octavo die Februarii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 17 R. 2, p. 2, m. 35.

No. XXIV.

DE PROTECCIONE.

REX omnibus ballivis et fidelibus suis ad quos 1398.
presentes litere pervenerint, salutem.

Sciatis quod,

Cum dilectum armigerum nostrum, Galfridum
Chaucer, ad quamplura ardua et urgencia negocia
nostra, tam in absentia quam in presentia nostris,
in diversis partibus, infra regnum nostrum Anglie,
facienda et expedienda, ordinaverimus,

Idemque Galfridus timeat, se, per quosdam
emulos suos, per quamplures querelas sive sectas,
dum sic negociis nostris intenderit, inquietari, mo-
lestari, sive implacitari, et nobis supplicaverit, ut
sibi in hac parte subvenire velimus,

Nos,

Volentes pro securitate ipsius Galfridi prospicere
gratiose,

Suscepimus ipsum Galfridum, ac homines, ter-
ras, res, redditus et omnes possessiones suas, in
protectionem et defensionem nostras speciales :

Nolentes quod ipse, a data presentium, per duos
annos integros, ad cujuscunque persone sectam,
nullatenus arrestetur, seu aliquialiter implacitetur ;

set quod ipse de omnimodis placitis et querelis (placitis terre duntaxat exceptis) per tempus predictum omnino sit quietus :

Et ideo vobis mandamus, quod ipsum Galfridum, homines, terras, res, redditus, et omnes possessiones suas, manuteneatis, protegatis et defendatis, juxta vim, formam et effectum presentium literarum nostrarum,

Non inferentes eis, seu, quantum in vobis est, ab aliis inferri permittentes, injuriam, molestiam, dampnum, violentiam, impedimentum aliquod, seu gravamen ;

Et, si quid eis forisfactum, sive injuriatum fuerit, id eis sine dilatione, debite corrigi et emendari faciatis.

In cujus, &c. per biennium duraturas.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, quarto die Maii.

Per ipsum regem.

Pat. 21 R. 2, p. 3, m. 26.

No. XXV.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem. 1398.

Sciatis quod, de gracia nostra speciali, concessimus dilecto armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, unum dolium vini, percipiendum singulis annis, a primo die Decembris ultimi preteriti, durante vita sua, in portu civitatis nostre Londonie, per manus capitalis pincerne nostri, seu deputati sui, ibidem pro tempore existentis.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, decimo quinto die Octobris.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 22 R. 2, p. 1, m. 8.

This patent differs only in a few subordinate particulars from that which Rymer has printed from the same roll, m. 5, dated two days earlier, and subscribed, Per ipsum regem.

No. XXVI.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1399. **REX** omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gracia nostra speciali, et pro bono servicio quod dilectus armiger noster, Galfridus Chaucer, nobis impendit, et impendet, concessimus eidem Galfrido quadraginta marcas, percipiendas singulis annis, durante vita sua, ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Pasche et Sancti Michaelis, per equales portiones, ultra illas viginti libras sibi per dominum Ricardum nuper regem Anglie Secundum post Conquestum concessas, et per nos confirmatas, percipiendas durante vita sua ad scaccarium nostrum supradictum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, tercio decimo die Octobris.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 1 H. 4, p. 5, m. 12.

No. XXVII.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

1399.

Constat nobis per inspeccionem rotulorum cancellarie domini Ricardi, nuper regis Anglie, Secundi post Conquestum, quod idem nuper rex literas suas patentes fieri fecit in hec verba,

Ricardus, &c. [vide No. XXIII.]

Constat etiam nobis, per inspeccionem rotulorum cancellarie ejusdem nuper regis, quod idem nuper rex alias literas suas patentes fieri fecit in hec verba,

Ricardus, &c. [vide No. XXV.]

Nos, pro eo quod idem Galfridus, coram nobis in cancellaria nostra personaliter constitutus, sacramentum prestitit corporale, quod litere predictae casualiter sunt amisse, tenorem inrotulamenti earundem literarum duximus exemplificandum per presentes.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, decimo octavo die Octobris.

Per ipsum regem.

Pat. 1 H. 4, p. 1, m. 18.

No. XXVIII.

INDENTURA INTER CUSTODEM CAPELLE [BEATE
MARIE WESTMONASTERII] ET GALFRIDUM
CHAUCER PRO DOMO CERTO JUXTA CAPEL-
LAM [PREDICTAM.] FIRMA LIII^s IV^d.

1399. “**H**EC indentura, facta apud Westmonasterium, in vigilia natalis Domini, anno regni regis Henrici Quarti post Conquestum primo.

Testatur quod frater Robertus Hermodesworth, commonachus et custos capelle Beate Marie Westmonasterii, ex unanimi assensu et consensu domini abbatis, prioris, et conventus Westmonasterii predicti, concessit, dimisit, et ad firmam tradidit, Galfrido Chaucers, armigero, unum tenementum, cum suis pertinenciis, situatum in gardino capelle predictæ.

Habendum et tenendum tenementum predictum, cum suis pertinenciis, eidem Galfrido a vigilia natalis Domini predicti, usque ad finem et terminum quinquaginta et trium annorum, extunc proxime sequentium, et plenarie completorum.

Reddendo inde annuatim custodi capelle predictæ, qui pro tempore fuerit, seu ejus certo atornato, ad quatuor anni terminos usuales equaliter, quinquaginta tres solidos et quatuor denarios sterlingorum :

Et, si dicta firma quinquaginta trium solidorum et quatuor denariorum, ad aliquem terminum quo solvi debeat, in parte, vel in toto, per quindecim dies a retro fuerit non soluta, tunc bene liceat custodi capelle predictæ, qui pro tempore fuerit, aut ejus attornato, in dicto tenemento, cum pertinentiis, distringere, et distractiones captas abducere, asportare, et penes se retineri, quousque de dicta firma, et arreragiis ejusdem, si que fuerint, sibi plenarie fuerit satisfactum : Et, si nulla sufficiens districtio in dicto tenemento, cum pertinentiis, inveniri poterit, quod tunc bene licebit custodi dicte capelle, qui pro tempore fuerit, in dictum tenementum, cum suis pertinentiis, reintrare, et in pristino statu suo tenere, presentibus indendentibus non obstantibus :

Et dictus Galfridus tenementum predictum, cum suis pertinentiis, sumptibus et custis suis propriis, durante dicto termino, sustentabit, reparabit ac manutenebit ; et illud in adeo bono statu et reparatu quo in principio recepit, seu meliori, custodi ejusdem capelle, qui pro tempore fuerit, in fine termini sui predicti, sursum liberabit et dimittet :

Et non licebit predicto Galfrido tenementum predictum, nec aliquam parcellam ejusdem, infra idem tempus alicui dimittere, seu ad firmam tradere, nec aliquem, privilegia et libertates seu immunitates ecclesie Westmonasterii predictæ peten-

tem, in eodem tenemento recipere, seu hospitari, sine licentia custodis dicte capelle, qui pro tempore fuerit, et sacriste Westmonasterii predicti, speciali :

Et, si dictus Galfridus infra tempus predictum obierit, tunc bene licebit custodi capelle predicte, qui pro tempore fuerit, in dictum tenementum, cum suis pertinentiis, statim post obitum ejusdem Galfridi, reintrare, et in pristino statu suo tenere, presentibus indenturis non obstantibus.

In cujus rei testimonium, tam sigillum fratris Roberti, custodis predicti officii sui, quo utitur, quam sigillum predicti Galfridi, partibus presentis indenture alternatim sunt appensa.

Datum loco, die et anno supradictis."

*Ex autographo (sigillis carente) in Archivis
Decani et Capituli Westmonasterii.*

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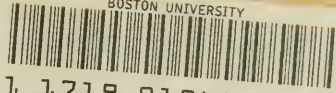
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